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Discourse and Development:

Language and Power in a Rural Rajasthani Meeting

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Discourse and Development:

Language and Power in a Rural Rajasthani Meeting

by

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This research represents the fulfillment of a dream I have long held – to be able to sit with an elderly person in a village of rural India and to simply chat with him or her about whatever comes to mind. When I first came as a graduate student to the University of Texas at Austin, I hoped to learn how to ask good questions should I ever have that opportunity.

First, I must thank my advisor throughout my journey and project, Dr. James Brow. He stood up for me and stood by me whenever I needed his support. He opened doors for my dreams to wander. He taught me the importance of learning how to ask better questions, and to keep questioning, everything I read, hear, and see. He directed me to the study of development in South Asia. Without Dr. Brow's guidance, none of this would have been possible.

The members of my dissertation committee contributed to my preparation for going "to the field" and my approach to the data after returning. Dr. Joel Sherzer introduced me to possibilities for examining language and culture as a way to begin weaving the study of micro- and macro-processes of communication into a larger, integrated discussion. Dr. Katie Stewart prompted me to carefully place myself within the research, giving new meanings to my understanding of how to be respectful as a researcher and writer of other people's perspectives. Dr. Laura Lein taught me how to conduct research with "human subjects" and encouraged my hope that for some participants and readers this project may

eventually suggest useful applications of certain ideas to their efforts in development. I look forward to Dr. Shama Gamkhar's comments on the project both as an Indian familiar with some of the settings and issues described here and for her expertise in policy development as it relates to the findings here.

Seated on the verandah of my friend Mawaram's home one afternoon in February of 1996, his father came and sat next to me. He asked why I kept coming to his village and home, and I realized in that moment that my dream was becoming reality. In order to speak with Mawaram's father, I first had to learn Hindi, then a smattering of Mewari. For this, I must thank Drs. Herman Van Olphen and Sagaree Sengupta, who pushed me to learn what it might be like to think in the language of many Indians. For what I could think of in that moment, I must also thank Drs. Robert Hardgrave and Tom Januzzi, who provided me with tools for examining political and economic histories of India and their impact on local lives today. One of my first professors of anthropology, Dr. Ward Keeler initiated me, with great patience, into the field of social theory, which to this day informs much of my own worldview. Many other professors also contributed to my ability to complete this project, and I thank them all for their instruction and insights: Drs. Deborah Kapchan, Elizabeth Keating, Gail Minault, Greg Urban, and Kamala Visweswaran. In Delhi, I wish to thank Drs. Ashish Nandy and Yogendra Yadav of the Centre for Developing Societies for their input and support during the research. For funding this project, I thank the Department of Education's Fulbright-Hays for Doctoral Research program, and the American Institute of Indian Studies Junior Fellows grant for doctoral research.

The many friends and colleagues I met in Udaipur District during the course of my research between late-1994 and mid-1996 still provide me with the primary motivation to share my findings with everyone there who helped to make the project possible. I cannot name all of them here, but the managers and staff of Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthhaan (SVS) were remarkably open and helpful as I studied their documents, projects and practices. They referred me to other organizations, even those that consider themselves as "competitors," and they always supported my efforts to obtain unbiased versions of their own work and development processes in the region, more generally. Many people at SVS treated me as a friend even when they did not entirely understand my purpose in hanging around their offices and accompanying them to villages. Many of my best days in Udaipur passed drinking *chai* on the SVS lawn with an ever-rotating group of staff, professionals and village workers coming to share in the *gupchup* ("light conversation").

I would also like to thank my friends Krishna, Mohan, and Mawaram at Prayatna Samiti, a small NGO with just five main staff members, who introduced me to very different styles of development work, as well as to my friends at Gudli in Girwa Block of Udaipur District. Rajiv Khandelwal continues to be my guide and conscience for approaching this complex topic of rural development relations. Without our many nights spent together pondering and philosophizing, my understanding of NGOs and rural development could have never advanced enough to complete this project.

My assistants for this project, Yakuub-jii, Mahesh and Ambalaal each made critical contributions to this project. Yakuub-jii and Mahesh patiently transcribed hours of cassette tapes and assisted me in translating many of them for inclusion in the notes. Mahesh and Ambalaal accompanied me to villages where their abilities to establish rapport and assist me to "connect" with local residents allowed me to later ask the challenging and sometimes strange questions that make up the themes of this project. In some cases, Mahesh's questions were also much better than my own, as he internalized the goals for my research and made them his own during the period we worked together.

The many development professionals who took time to meet with me in Delhi, Ahmedabad and Mumbai each contributed to my ability to ask better questions each time I returned to Udaipur. They also openly shared their own perspectives and experiences, allowing me a glimpse into their personal and professional lives, some of which has been described here.

In the face of mounting evidence suggesting otherwise, my family continued to believe that I could and would finally complete my dissertation writing. My father, Bill, and my mother, Sherron, provided me from a very young age with the strength to choose a different path than only those already known to me or them. Their sustained confidence in me later gave me the strength to reach the end of this particularly challenging path toward attaining the Ph.D. degree.

Finally, my greatest inspiration for all I aspire to emanates from my wife Angela and our son, Matthew. Angela's unbelievable patience with me

throughout this process rests somewhere beyond my comprehension, I feel. I don't know how I can return all that she has done to love and support me along the way, but I am grateful that I now I will have more time to just sit quietly with her during weekends and evenings. Matthew was born three months before I completed a draft of the dissertation, and I know that I was impelled to work harder and finish because his opinion and respect matter more to me than anything else in this world.

Discourse and Development:

Language and Power in a Rural Rajasthani Meeting

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Within the broad field of international development, issues of communication and power between funding agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and rural "beneficiaries" are paramount in the minds of participants at all levels. This dissertation examines communication, relations and expressions of power and resistance between individuals from each of these three groups as they interacted at a meeting in an Adi-Vasi village of southern Rajasthan in 1995. This "Big Meeting," as referred to here, represented a relatively rare occurrence in international development projects in which representatives from all three groups (funding agency, NGO, and villagers) were present. Employing Foucauldian notions of discourse, relations of power between members from each group as expressed at the "Big Meeting" are examined in their social contexts, including interpretations of development language (e.g. "participation," "partnerships," and "development" itself). Having introduced the setting and characters of the "Big Meeting" in the second chapter, the following chapters examine the backgrounds and perspectives on development held by individuals present that day from among the villagers, NGO managers and staff, and funding agency representatives from Delhi and

abroad. Informed by certain sociolinguistic tools for studying discourse and culture, detailed presentation of transcripts from the meeting set alongside contextual information taken from interviews with participants at the meeting yields clues to their perspectives on the interaction and on development processes, more generally. As a kind of "multi-sited ethnography," this research shifts attention between the perspectives and desires, and the specific contexts for the birth of those perspectives and desires, from one group to another (i.e. Adi-Vasis in a rural Rajasthani village, NGO staff and managers in a small Indian city, and funding agency project managers and consultants in Delhi). While people from each group expressed their perspectives and desires differentially, some more or less directly than others, the villagers, NGO managers and staff, and funding agency representatives interviewed each related frustrations with the limitations of structured development interactions, such as the "Big Meeting." Finally, the efficacy of structurally constrained, power-laden practices for designing, monitoring and evaluating international development projects by foreign funding agency representatives is called into question by the dissertation's conclusion.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Last year a *videshii* (foreigner) came to our village with some *sansthaan*[1] (NGO) people who work here. The *videshii* did not speak Hindi, so a man from the *sansthaan* translated for him. The *videshii* wanted to know what is the main problem in our village. I told him *paanii* (water). He saw *paanii* flowing in this dry riverbed, and he saw the hills were green because of the rains. He said to me, 'You don't have a water problem here. There is a lot of water.' It did not come to his understanding that only eight weeks a year is the river there. The rest of the time it is dry, as it is now. The hills are rock and sand, and only during the rainy season is it green. The man from the *sansthaan* spoke with him. The *videshii* did not speak to me again. He went on speaking in English with the other man. I also said nothing more to him. Soon after, they left the village. I wondered what the other man told him about this place. He did not ask us about how is life here."

Khetiilaal smiled slightly as he looked at me. Then he looked away toward his dry fields of dirt. Seated that afternoon under the wide canopy of the neem tree between his mud home and the parched riverbed, I thought to myself that this is just why I came to this remote corner of the world: to study communication, miscommunication and power relations between people at the

[1] *Sansthaan* is the Hindi/Mewari word for "institution," which in these rural situations most commonly refers to the Non-Governmental (NGO) organizations working there.

centers and peripheries of international development systems. In my moment of academic excitement, I tried to ask Khetiilaal more about his meeting with the foreigner, but he did not return to the topic of my research. Instead, we talked about the dry heat in the air, his wife's excellent *daal-baatii*,[2] and about the road to his village from the city. He was very polite, but he seemed to me distant after he finished his tale of the foreigner's visit. I felt that he could see I was interested in his story, but perhaps he did not feel inclined to share too much in our first meeting. If the commonly related experience of meetings with foreigners in the village could provide him any indication, he may have believed this would be our last meeting, as well.

In later discussions, some *gariib log*[3] of the village told me that they once believed that people visiting them from faraway places would somehow be able to help them confront their difficulties. They no longer held such hopes. Many people from outside had come and gone, while the situation in the village changed little with each passing year.

Khetiilaal's oldest daughter emerged from the dark doorway of their mud home carrying a tin water cup. She offered me the cool well water that had preoccupied my mind for most of the past hour. The water washed away the dust

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[2] Spicy lentils with wheat balls toasted in the embers of a fire and soaked in *ghee* (clarified butter).
[3] *Gariib log* translates from the Hindi as "poor (*gariib*) people (*log*)." I choose at times to substitute this term for "*villagers*" because it is a term employed by many rural North Indians to describe themselves and their neighbors. I also use this term because I hope that it may help readers to avoid making generic assumptions concerning "*gariib log*" or notions of "the village"

on my lips and throat, and I spilled some on my shirt as I tried to carefully pour it into my mouth without "polluting" the cup by touching it to my lips.[4] In that moment early in my research, I felt that I was beginning to understand their problem. Over the next eighteen months, my understanding of the problems that plague Khetiilaal's family and friends would deepen. I witnessed the people of this region struggle to survive through one of the worst droughts and famine that they had faced in more than a generation. "In water is life," I later heard another man say, "and when the water does not come, we become weak from sickness and hunger. Some people and livestock do not survive."

The research I undertook in the dry, deforested region of Southern Rajasthan allowed me to witness and, to a limited extent, participate in the daily struggles of a few *gariib log* who welcomed me into their lives. Along with some ethnographic descriptions of these villagers' lives, this project also counterposes the experiences, perceptions, and ways of communicating of people living in villages with those of the "outsiders" from Delhi and abroad who visited them in shiny vehicles every couple of years or so. I also spent many hours and months working alongside the people who provided the connectivity between villagers and "outsiders" in these brief interactions—the local grassroots organizers and

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as people and places that are somehow less specific and peculiar than other more familiar people or places. This idea is further discussed later in this chapter.

[4] When sharing a glass of water or any other beverage, most people in India believe that the glass cannot be shared by another person once it has touched the lips and become ritually "polluted" by the saliva of the offending drinker.

staff working to implement rural development projects in the region surrounding Udaipur, Rajasthan. The data for this dissertation were gathered primarily among and with the gracious support of a particular NGO working in Udaipur District, Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan.[5] The research also eventually took me to Delhi where I met with foreign and Indian project managers administering funds to the NGOs, known by most in the development world as "donors." Similarly to the *gariib log*, from their carpeted and air-conditioned offices, the "development elite" also expressed frustrations with their commonly half-day "reconnaissance missions" to villages where they fund projects. This study examines interactions between these three different groups of people (villagers, NGO professionals and staff, and international development donors) and discusses both immediate and potential long-term effects from such development encounters.

SUMMARY OF RESEARCH AND ISSUES

As in many other parts of the world, the past decade has seen unprecedented growth in the grassroots, non-governmental organization (NGO) sector in India's development scene. Governmental and international donor agencies are increasingly looking to NGOs to implement and monitor small- to medium-scale development projects throughout rural India. The communication

[5] The names of the organizations and of all people involved in this research project have been changed. Any regional affiliation, such as North America, Europe, or Asia in the cases of such agencies is not necessarily indicative of the actual regional affiliation of the organizations who participated in the research. Although this clearly poses some problems for interpreting cultural

and relationships between these diverse development practitioners constitute an area of inquiry the importance of which was underscored by nearly every person I met working in development. In meetings with people at very different levels of rural development processes, the most commonly stated remark I heard was that communication between development workers and their "partners" has typically been overlooked, and that it definitely merits greater attention. I found that many individuals involved in development processes tend to have lasting memories of anecdotes and intuitive insights on instances of miscommunication, language and power. Yet, there remains a remarkable paucity of research into these issues. Systematic analyses of trends in development communication are even scarcer. In an effort to address these issues, I chose to take up a social and political-economic ethnographic study of language, communication, miscommunication, and power in a particular institutionalized development setting.

This research explores the following primary questions: 1) How do the various communication styles, intentions, and motivations within different groups of participants in development processes affect implementation and perceptions of development projects? 2) Employing techniques informed by sociolinguistic research to gather data and analyze development interactions, how can the researcher identify, track and characterize shifting power relations and their wider

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and linguistic norms for the groups and individuals described here, it is necessary to maintain the privacy and wishes of the participants that their ideas and comments should remain anonymous.

effects in the communications and miscommunications of specific development interactions?

The three primary sites of this research were: 1) selected Bhil (referred to also as Adivasi or "tribal"[6]) villages of Udaipur District, Rajasthan; 2) Udaipur-based NGOs that serve these villages; and, 3) the Delhi offices of large development funding agencies. Individuals at each of these development sites volunteered to participate in this investigation, consenting to my observation and recording of interactions within and between the development groups.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The questions and methodologies that inform this research stem from two traditionally separate disciplines: first, from Foucauldian political-economic notions of discourse analysis and Gramscian hegemony, which seek to identify the nature of power relations within or between cultures and societies; second, from sociolinguistic studies of interactive "speech communities" (Gumperz:

[6] The term "tribal" was originally applied by British administrators to refer to the "Bhils" of Rajasthan, as well as many other supposedly indigenous or pre-Aryan communities throughout India. The term is generally viewed as a derogatory way to refer to these groups, and thus the term "Adivasi" was coined in 1941 by social worker A.V. Thakkar (Weisgrau 1992: 1) in an effort to confer greater respect to some of India's least accepted and respected communities. The term translates from the Hindi as "first, earliest dweller, inhabitant." Despite efforts to the contrary, "Adivasi" like "tribal" has come to connote negative stereotypes, such as illiteracy, poverty, and general "backwardness." I prefer the term "Bhil" because it is more specific in its reference to the people of Southern Rajasthan (although Bhil communities may also be found in other parts of the state, as well as in areas of the neighboring states of Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat). Bhil is also the term that most of these people use to refer to themselves when speaking outside of more specific family or geographic referents. Meenas are another important "Scheduled Tribe" of the District. They are typically found in greater numbers in the northern parts of Udaipur District, whereas Bhils are found in great numbers throughout the District but are especially predominant in the blocks south of Udaipur City.

1968), which suggest that studies of linguistic discursive practice can provide information on both the language and the culture in which people operate. Within this context above, my research focuses on the following questions:

> (1) To what extent do the various assumptions, preconceptions, or the general "world views" held by development's sub-communities affect relations, decisions, and communication regarding the implementation, monitoring, or funding of an NGO-sponsored development project?
> (2) If ethnographic research undertaken in a broad range of Indian development contexts is coupled with analyses of specific speech events involving development's sub-communities, how may this enhance our understanding of larger trends in power relations, intentions, communication and miscommunication within institutionalized development processes?

This ethnographic study of development projects and processes focuses on expressions of language and power in specific development interactions. It examines notions of *discourse* along a range between linguistic and social theoretical understandings of the term. I suggest that these traditionally disparate usages of the term *discourse* are, as we shall see below, less polarized than they are representative of a kind of theoretical spectrum between linguistic interpretations focusing on language in cultural contexts and Foucauldian discussions of discourses of power and society.

"THE FIELD" SETTING

Notions of "The Field"

As with every ethnography, this dissertation introduces the "field setting" where the research was carried out; but, as with many modern or post-modern ethnographies including a collection of essays edited by Ferguson and Gupta (1997), assumptions concerning "the field" setting itself are often called into question. Before I present the relevant background information for this ethnography, I would also like to discuss the notion that "the field" as constructed by both anthropologists and by development professionals is rarely just a geographically-bound space but has an ideological dimension, as well. My interest in this issue arose out of the many conversations I had in the first months of the research with people ranging from colleagues and faculty at my university to NGO field staff, international development professionals, NGO managers and bureaucrats from the local, state, and central governments. The question that consistently arose in these widely varying conversations was, "When are you going to *the field*?" I found this rather amusing after about the fifth or sixth time I heard it, because once I had left my university campus and the US, I pretty much always felt that I already was in *the field.* *The field* is ultimately a space constructed and defined by people who tend to believe that where they are sitting and acting is not (and perhaps should not be) a site for close ethnographic study. Such notions of "the field" tend to become naturalized in daily development and

academic discourses. This phenomenon is similar to Stacy Pigg's discussion of how notions of "the village," "this ethnic group," or "this region" tend to become taken-for-granted terms that refer to enormously diverse spaces, places and people (Pigg 1992).

What most of us, including researchers and various types of professionals, who speak of going to "the field" may share in common is an academic distance from the subjects of our research or, as in the case of many of subjects of this study, the "villagers" living and working near development projects. One of the most striking aspects of this distance for the purposes of this dissertation is that academic researchers (ethnographers, in particular) share a common parlance with development practitioners at nearly every level of a development project. As disciplines that have both, in some sense, arisen from colonial orientations to "others" (Said 1978) ethnography and international development have adopted strikingly similar language for describing experiences with those people who are the target of their professional efforts. For both, the only place that seems to count as "a field" for nearly all of the people and groups discussed here is the "local" village community where "the real action is."[7]

Similarly, "the village" as discussed by so many development professionals, government officers, and many anthropologists often refers to the

[7] A senior Indian Administrative Service officer posted in Delhi told me that "You have to get out of Delhi, even out of Udaipur, to see where the real action is. It doesn't happen here, even though many of my colleagues even do not realize this."

non-generalizable and vastly diverse places where many of the subjects of "development interventions" or ethnographic research tend to live. The use of such terms expresses a distance from these subjects of research or development efforts and tends to lead to a mental containment of these "informants," "partners," friends and acquaintances in an ideal typical fictional place. The description of "the village" as "local" is similarly problematic. The assumption behind the suggestion that "village realities" occupy a "local" space seems to refer primarily to the experience of development professionals who move between "local" and "global realities." For people living in these places far from the urban power centers, to describe their situation as "local" would probably seem redundant. While they realize that there is a larger world outside of their daily experience, the "global" experience often remains entirely outside their purview or imagination. In attempting to describe "local realities" professionals and academics alike employ terms that have little or no relation to the world-view of their "subjects." Ultimately, as outsiders, we must try to find ways to describe and relate our perspectives to those of the people with whom we work, but we should also remain aware that our terms for description are necessarily limited. The terms themselves should not become naturalized to the point where we may come to believe that they express a "true" reality for someone else.

While it is true that many Westerners and middle-class urban Indians "cannot relate" to most rural Indian people or experiences, this is not really the

primary issue of importance for this dissertation. The greater point is that very often Westerners and middle-class Indians working either in academia or in development organizations, governmental or non-governmental, tend to believe that they themselves could not also become a "subject" of interest for another professional person, aside from perhaps lawyers or doctors. After all, they are accustomed to being in the role of researcher and investigator, defining the terms of engagement in interview situations.[8] I discovered that to be interviewed was a novel experience for many of the people I met among the "development elite" in Delhi and abroad, whereas being interviewed (or interrogated, as the case may be) was a common experience among "villagers" where development projects take place. Stereotyped notions of "the field" and "the village" tend to reinforce these presumptions of academic distance and power, especially on the part of those who often travel at the highest levels of global hierarchies, academic or professional. I will address this issue in greater detail in chapter five through discussions of donor agency perspectives on relationships and communication with village communities and "local" NGOs.

INTRODUCTION TO UDAIPUR

My former wife, Stephanie, and I moved to Udaipur City, Rajasthan from our home in Austin, Texas on January 3, 1995, having been married in her native France only four months before. The intervening months had also been very

[8] Of course, I, too, am guilty of the same misperception as I am accustomed to seeing *my field*

difficult with academic preparations to enter "the field" and a bizarre and scary virus that attacked every joint in my body. Once I got a clean bill of health from both the rheumatologist and my dissertation prospectus committee, I was thrilled to be on my way back to India.[9] Having been introduced to the idea by my political science professor at the University of Texas, I chose to work in Udaipur District because it is renowned as one of the NGO centers of North India, with more than a hundred organizations in various states of activity or inactivity. I was also intrigued by the possibility of working in what is commonly referred to as "The Tribal Belt," which extends from Gujarat in the south, to the Pakistan border in the west, to Rajasthan's border with Punjab in the north, and across Madhya Pradesh as far even as Bihar to the east. In my three previous stays in India, I had never visited Rajasthan or the other areas of "The Tribal Belt." India's rich national anthropological tradition tends to center around this region and the "native" people there, so I regarded with anticipation the opportunity to work in this area myself. With nearly forty percent of the District's population claiming to be members of the "Scheduled Tribe" category in the national classification for caste affiliation (Census of India: 1991), Udaipur City is also home to the national Tribal Research Center.

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everywhere outside of my university setting.

[9] My first three extended visits to India included two stays in Pune with an undergraduate academic program both as student and program monitor and a summer Hindi language program in Varanasi.

Udaipur is unquestionably one of the most enchanting cities in India I have seen. Famous for its beautiful lakes and palaces, including the world-renowned Lake Palace, the city attracts hundreds of thousands of tourists every year from all over the world. Upon our arrival in Udaipur, Stephanie and I also felt overdue for a bit of honeymoon ambiance since we had only been married a short time before. So, we decided to relax for a few days before beginning the long search for a place to live by staying in one of the old, white-washed Rajput hotels that crowd the shores of Lake Pichola. Our initial impressions of Udaipur were pretty much the same as those of the throng of foreigners who pass through the city, mostly between the months of August and March when the weather agrees with typical Westernized notions of vacation and relaxation. We were immediately impressed by the green hills, some would say mountains, that surround the city and its lakes. In the evenings, the colorful skies would often fill with green parrots flying circles around the balconies and rooftops of the old city and its outlying "colonies" (neighborhoods). Almost immediately, we felt sure that we had made the right decision to come to this corner of the world for my research and the beginning of our newly married life together.

Over the following three months, having decided that the city center was too busy and crowded for our long-term stay in Udaipur, we struggled to find a place to live in one of the small "colonies" where many middle-class Udaipuris now live. Week after week, we returned to the front desk of the hotel where we

were staying to pay another week's rent. After about seven weeks like this, we felt that we were beginning to have problems with the hotel owner and his family, although I now think that we were simply becoming frustrated with our lack of independence or ability to identify and move into our own place in the city. We moved to another hotel, and we stayed there for nearly another six weeks before we finally found our own apartment in a quiet, middle-class Jain colony not too far from the city center.

Udaipur City had an approximate population of just under 400,000 people (308,571 in the 1991 census), but many more people live in the *bastis* (settlements) just outside the city. As in every other Indian city, the birds are not the only beings that come out to enjoy the warm evenings. People throng the streets on their scooters and motorbikes, squeezing between the motorized rickshaws at traffic lights, many of them belching smoke and coloring the sky orange with smog and dust. After two months in Udaipur, I bought my own motorbike, which was only a little less loud and polluting since I could afford a new one with the ample research grant that afforded us a relatively very comfortable lifestyle. The motorbike was my ticket out of the urban pressures, and soon I was journeying on my own out of town to the villages where I would undertake much of my research.

Several main arteries lead out of Udaipur, including National Highway 8, a major thoroughfare between Bombay, Ahmedabad, Jaipur and Delhi. Although

I tried to avoid it whenever possible because of the preponderance of overloaded, seemingly unguided trucks that race through the hills around the city, I sometimes found myself crowded to the side of the Highway on my way out to one of the villages I visited often. I much preferred the one and a half-lane state highway that leads southwest out of town to BaNaawaT, the other village I frequently visited, and the area where most of activity described in this dissertation was located. The road winds from the centuries-old, man-made lakes of Udaipur up to the narrow valleys of the Aravalli Mountains. Traveling outside of the city, one is immediately impressed by the beauty and apparent peace of the surrounding hills. Of Udaipur District's total population of approximately 3.2 million people, eighty-three percent (Census of India: 1991) live in these rural areas. About every four or five kilometers along the road, one encounters another village, usually comprised of little more than a single *dukaan* (dry goods store), a *dabhaa* (roadside diner and tea-stall), and perhaps another general store with a few inexpensive clothes and plastic sandals. About every twenty-five to fifty kilometers one finds a larger village that usually serves as the economic and administrative center for the *tehsil* or the block[10]. Udaipur District is comprised of eleven such blocks. At these local centers of economic, political, governmental, and non-governmental activity, one typically finds the local

[10] *Tehsils* are state government subdivisions of districts, while *blocks* are *panchayat samiti* administrative subdivisions of districts. The number and names of the tehsils correspond almost

farmer's market and a collection of small stores that sell a wide range of products and foods for daily and festival life in the areas surrounding these villages, ranging from silver jewelry to farming supplies.

Located in India's second largest state by area, Udaipur District is considerably less densely populated than other regions of the country,[11] although it is also more populated than most of the rest of the state's desert regions. Sixty percent of the District's residents are cultivators, and most of these farmers are subsistence farmers working on small, overworked plots of usually one acre or less in size. The clay loam soil is "deep to moderately deep" (NABARD 1996: 5), while the all of the seven major rivers that flow through the district

> are non-perennial rivers which flow during the rainy season only. Besides, there are several artificial tanks and lakes in the district. Among them, Jaisamand, which lies at a distance of about 50 kms. south-east of Udaipur, is said to be one of the largest artificial lakes in the world" (ibid. 5).

Water and rainfall[12] are persistent sources of stress and concern for the farmers of the region, a problem compounded in recent years by frequent droughts and continued deforestation.[13] Temperatures in the region range from around 2

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completely with the number and names of the blocks in Udaipur District. There are ten tehsils, only one of which one is divided into two blocks.

[11] According to the Census of 1991, the population density of Udaipur District is 167 people per sq. km., as opposed to the national average of 267 per sq. km., and the state average of 129.

[12] The average District rainfall for the ten-year period between 1985 and 1994 was 63.3 cms. (NABARD: 1996). 1995,when I conducted the majority of this research, was a drought year, with total rainfall well below this average.

[13] At present, approximately twenty-six percent of the District's total area is considered as "under forest" (ibid. 8). I was told by several farmers and NGO professionals who have decades of

degrees Celsius in January to as high as 45 degrees Celsius in June. The rocky hills of the region are generally uncultivable, although many of these areas serve as pastureland for local farmers' goats, water buffaloes, and cows. Of the District's total area of 1,463,468 hectares, only eighteen percent is actually under cultivation. Of this area under cultivation, less than forty-five percent is irrigated (ibid. 8).

In an area that receives such minimal rainfall, with an average of only thirty-one rainy days per year, farming conditions are essentially dictated by each year's unpredictable weather patterns. As in many areas of North India, Udaipur District has two primary crop seasons: *kharif* (from the arrival of the monsoon in late June to harvest in October) and *raabi* (from November to harvest in April). The actual area included under this double-cropping, however, is less than fifty percent of the total cultivable land, because irrigation is typically required for the raabi crop during the sparse period of rainfall in the winter season. The majority of the District's cultivable land is used to grow corn during the kharif, followed by wheat, barley, gram, and oil seed (typically mustard) during the raabi. Traditional varieties of corn in the area are now being replaced by the introduction of new genetically engineered varieties that are up to twice as large per ear as their local predecessors. Many farmers and their families told me however, that they still prefer the sweeter taste of the original variety, even if their

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experience in the region that this total has fallen from around 50-60% under forest in the past

yield is less than half what they would receive from the new variety. The result is that some farmers choose to cultivate small plots with the old variety for personal consumption during the growing seasons, combined with cultivating somewhat larger areas with the new varieties for storage throughout the dry season and for sale in the local wholesale markets. The staple foods for most the region's rural communities are *daal* (spicy lentil soup), *bhaajraa kii rotii* (millet bread), *makki kii rotii* (flattened corn bread), and, for special occasions, *baatii* (small wheat balls baked in the coals of a fire and soaked in clarified butter).

Udaipur District's rather meager agricultural resources are not evenly distributed among its inhabitants. The majority of cultivable, irrigated farmland is owned and farmed by Rajput families. These high-caste farmers tend to maintain much larger holdings (often around 10-50 acres per family in the two rural areas where I worked most often) compared than the barely sustainable holdings of the Bhil and Meena farmers (usually little more than one *bhiga*, or about ¾ of an acre). The Rajput farmers can usually afford to maintain wells and pumps to irrigate their land, as well as the chemical fertilizers to increase their crop yields. Most Bhils and Meenas do not have access to these agricultural implements, except in some communities where the farmers have joined their resources to maintain wells and pumps that they share. The result is that few Bhils or Meenas can afford to raise crops during the raabi, and the maize that they grow during the

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thirty-five years.

kharif tends to be both smaller in size and less dense per acre than that cultivated by their Rajput counterparts. Another important farming caste of the region is the Dangi caste. While they are usually better off than the Bhils or Meenas, they rarely have more than several bhigas under cultivation, although they often are able to engage their land in double-cropping.

Over the past half-century, many Bhil and Meena households have increasingly turned to sharecropping or wage labor in order to sustain their livelihood. They often go to work for the Rajput (and, in a few cases, Dangi) farmers in their area, ploughing, planting and harvesting crops for a small share of the final product. As the rural economy has become more integrated with the larger national economy, wages are increasingly paid in Rupees to the agricultural laborers. While this still represents a minority of rural transactions between laborers and landlords, many landlords are finding that they can more easily obtain greater labor at a lesser cost when hiring people for wages. In addition, most Bhils and Meenas are illiterate, and they often cannot be sure when they are being cheated in monetary transactions.

The picture of rural life in Udaipur District that emerges most clearly from both statistics and personal observation is one of great inequalities between the "tribal" and "caste" farmers. While Rajput landlords tend to live in relatively large, well-maintained cement homes in their local villages, Bhil and Meena cultivators usually live in small, mud-walled and stone-roofed huts outside of the

village centers. Although the water supply is very inconsistent almost everywhere, water spigots and handpumps are never far away in the towns where the wealthier farmers live. During the drought years, however, many of those spigots and handpumps do not yield water. Nevertheless, without the benefit of running water at all, Bhil and Meena women and girls often walk as far as a mile or two to fetch water for their families and animals. Whereas Rajputs and some Dangis can afford to eat vegetables nearly every day, most Bhils and Meenas only eat *makki kii rotii* (flattened cornbread) and very watery daal heavily spiced with red chilies to give a sensation of substance when eating. Rajputs usually have several cows, water buffalo and many goats to provide their households with regular milk and yogurt products both for consumption and for sale. Bhils and Meenas often have only a few goats and perhaps one cow or water buffalo, and the little milk production they receive from these commonly malnourished animals is often sold or traded in order to obtain small packets of daal or cooking oil. In the many visits I made to the two rural villages where I stayed for much of my research, I only rarely heard of or witnessed funeral processions for Rajput landowners and their families. Of course, their overall numbers in the region compared with the Bhils and Meenas are much lower. Nevertheless, on at least half of the visits I made to these "interior" villages, I witnessed funeral processions for babies, toddlers and young girls or women of child-bearing age. The ritual wailing of the mothers, aunts, and female neighbors as they trailed

behind the bodies of their loved ones is a sound that I cannot forget. The vacant eyes of the fathers and brothers seemed to suggest that they have seen this happen all too many times. The rural poor of Udaipur do not have a strong belief in justice, given the history of discrimination, prejudice and violence under which they have toiled under for centuries. The meaning of "rural development" in Southern Rajasthan is essentially colored by these daily realities for a great number of people, and these realities are clearly the most difficult to change. Despite the concerted and often heroic efforts of some committed NGO staff and professionals (and some government officers, as well), the struggles faced by many people living in the villages of the region continue to present themselves as indomitable and often intractable.

The Roots of Historical Pride and Discrimination in the State of Mewar

Located in the south-central region of Rajasthan state, Udaipur District is is also known by its historical name of Mewar, "the Premier State of Rajputana" (Mehta 1989: iii). Because the last two hundred years of political and military history of Mewar have tended to be less victorious, most people concerned with regional pride in Udaipur District are more likely to locate this in the exploits of Maharana Pratap when he held the Mughal invaders at bay as they tried to conquer Udaipur, or in the great sacrifices made by the Mewaris in 1303 as they chose death and loyalty to Mewar over life and submission to the Muslim rulers. As Marathas of Maharashtra remain forever proud of their history and their great

leader Shivaji who held off the Muslim invaders from overtaking his kingdom in the Deccan, some people of Mewar, in particular Rajputs (Harlan 1992: 2), continue to extol the virtues of their loyal women as they burned with their dead husbands at Chittaur in acts of "sati" or the strength of their fiercely independent rulers who they claim have passed indomitable qualities down to them today.

Originally established in 568 AD[14], Mewaris often consider their state to be premier among the former Rajput states of North India (ranging from what are now the post-Independence states of Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan) in part because of its glorious military history in battles against Muslim invaders of the Mughal era (Harlan 1992: 2). In 1303, the army of the Sultan of Delhi attacked the Mewari capital of Chittaur, killing the Maharana (*king*) on the first day of battle. His successor led a valiant defense of the royal castle and fort the following day. When it became clear, however, that the Sultan's army would soon overrun the castle and its inhabitants, the remaining Rajput nobles, warriors, princesses and concubines "set fire to the royal castle, committing mass suicide rather than submitting to the humiliations of defeat. ...According to local versions of the story, 30,000 Hindus were slain in one day of the battle, and thousands more died by their own hand" (Weisgrau 1993: 27).

The Mewari rulers managed to regain control of the castle and its territories in the follow centuries, but Chittaur fell again into the Mughal Empire

when, in 1568, Akbar's armies defeated those of Maharana Udai Singh. The capital of Mewar was subsequently moved about 250 miles to the southwest, and the city of Udaipur was founded on the shores of Lake Pichola. Although Rana Udai Singh was forced to move his capital, he continued his reign and maintained his family's lineage, a reign and lineage that continued nearly uninterrupted for more than thirteen centuries (Paliwal 1971: 1). Attempts to bring Mewar under Mughal rule also continued nearly without interruption even after Udai Singh had moved the capital south. Rana Pratap Singh (1572-1597) rose to become undeniably the greatest cultural hero of Mewar by maintaining a prolonged and courageous resistance against the Mughal Empire. Although he and subsequent rulers were able to keep the State intact, with nearly every attempt at invasion by the powerful Mughal and Marathas, Mewar diminished in territory. By 1818, when the State of Mewar entered into treaty relations with the British East India Company, Mewar had little of its original territorial or symbolic strength (Paliwal 1971: 4). While this relationship and the subsequent agreements with the British Government protected Mewar from further outside invasions, the Maharana was compelled to relinquish all real powers first to the British Agent (under the East India Company) and later to the British Resident (under the colonial Government). Paliwal describes the situation preceding the Rebellion of 1857 thus:

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[14] Mewar's original name was *MedpaaT*, and according to J.N. Sharma the name continued to be

> The Rana ... was not entirely free to choose his own ministers. Thus he lost even that measure of freedom which he enjoyed in the days of Mughal domination and Maratha supremacy. Such conditions went to weaken the character of the ruler. As the initiative had been snatched away from him, he lost all his imagination and sense of responsibility. He sank in his own esteem and lost that stimulus to good Government, which is supplied by the fear of rebellion and deposition, and he became sensualist, careless, and lax. The nobles, coerced by external ascendancy (by the British), also lost their self-respect and got denigrated like their master. Under these conditions the oppression and suppression of the masses increased a great deal. (1971:15)

Under Maharana Fateh Singh's reign of more than forty-five years (1876-1921), some of the ruling classes of the State of Udaipur regained a bit of their lost pride and sense of independence, due in part to the Maharana's unwillingness to yield to British authority in many matters of state, even if most of his powers were little more than ceremonial. Fateh Singh did not support the growing Independence movement that was gathering strength at the turn-of-the-century because of his "medieval concepts" for maintaining a feudal polity (Paliwal 1971: 269), but he continued, nevertheless, to resist British reforms proposed for rural taxation and land distribution. Yet, his reluctance to support the peasant movements and the resistance to British rule led by other princes of Rajputana eventually undermined his support among his own people, as well. The British government responded by forcing Fateh Singh's abdication in 1921, when "[h]is gradual estrangement from his people, chiefs and Ruling Princes weakened his position and made it possible

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used in official correspondence until about the thirteenth century (Vyas 1990: 1).

at the end of the second decade of this century for the British Government to realise its wishes to compel the Maharana to submit" (Paliwal 1971:239).

While British officials and the Maharana and his followers struggled for the upper hand in "internal affairs," the peasant movements among the Bhil tribes of the region gained momentum. Even after Fateh Singh had been deposed, in 1922 the breakdown of British authority and the re-instatement of local Bhil Panchayats (village government) in one area of the State led to reprisals by British troops. Betraying a general lack of attention paid to less powerful people in historical renderings of Mewar and Udaipur[15], Paliwal writes:

> A large force under an English official attacked two villages of Sirohi, burnt all the houses and fired indiscriminately at the fleeing Bhils, killing about 1800 men, women, and children.
>
> Maharana Fateh Singh could never forget the injustice done to him by the British Government. (Paliwal 1971:261)

As calls for independence from British rule and reformation of oppressive taxation and forced free labor (*begar*) gained momentum in the decade leading to Independence in 1947, the actual powers of the Maharana continued to decline and the *gariib log* in rural areas of the State of Udaipur continued to struggle to maintain their subsistence livelihoods. After Independence, the princely states, including Udaipur, were abolished, and all control of local governance was turned over to Indian Civil Service (re-named after Independence as the Indian

Administrative Service) officers placed in charge of District- and Block-level administrative duties.

Local Developments Since 1947

Under Jawaharlal Nehru, few changes took place in the region aside from local industrial development works. Marble and zinc mining became the primary productive industries of the area, although the great majority of the population remained engaged in subsistence farming. According to Panelal Dangi, a social worker who was raised in a village not far from Udaipur, during the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Government of Rajasthan paid some *gariib log* an average of Rs. 500 to Rs. 1000 (a very substantial amount for that time) for each tree they would fell and transport to the nearest road. The effects of this "development program" have been devastating. Today, the mountains surrounding Udaipur City and extending several hundred miles from north to south across the southern region of Rajasthan and into northern Gujarat, the Aravali Mountains, are almost entirely deforested and some portions of the land are nearly devoid of vegetation. The land to the north of Udaipur City is so dry and rocky now that many of the region's inhabitants, especially the poorer Meena and Bhil families, have moved to look for work in Ahmedabad, Jaipur, or Delhi. The possibilities for renewing the land rest almost entirely upon the spotty efforts of government and NGO programs for watershed development, terracing the hills and planting trees to hold

[15] See the extensive Subaltern Studies Series by Oxford University Press for further reading on the

the rainfall. The work required to bring the land back to a point where it would be truly viable for regular farming again is, in some areas, beyond the immediate imagination of the farmers and development workers there.

Against this backdrop of extreme poverty and limited possibilities for improvement within this generation, NGOs, donor agencies, and a few committed local farmers and their families struggle to organize and implement often small-scale projects aimed at bringing some attainable yet significant changes for the people of the region. The efforts of the Government of Rajasthan are also commendable in a few remarkable cases, but one more frequently hears of local Agricultural Extension Officers assigned to rural offices that they rarely see. The hardships of living even temporarily in these villages far from their families back in the city are frequently more than these young career officers can regularly bear. The same is often true of the teachers and the local Assistant Nurse-Midwives (ANMs) that the Government posts to villages, many of which are not even accessible by bus or motorbike. The result of this bureaucratic neglect coupled with dire agricultural, economic, and social conditions leads many people living in these areas to feel little hope for change or improvement. While a handful of *gariib log* in a particular village where an NGO is attempting to develop credit and savings groups or primary education or health programs may feel encouraged enough to participate regularly in the organization's events and meetings, the

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need for more histories of the oppressed as opposed to only histories of the ruling classes.

majority of *gariib log* in many areas may feel that their participation in such programs is not worth the effort. Also, when food and water are as scarce as they usually become during the Hot Season, people's energy and concentration for such activities is equally scarce. Nevertheless, NGOs continue to propose new projects, and donor agencies continue to seek out those that they believe are most likely to overcome these difficulties and achieve some measure of "success."

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section lays the theoretical groundwork for the dissertation. The discussion centers on the convergence of sociolinguistic and political-economic/socio-cultural notions of "discourse," first in relation to the existing body of literature, and finally in relation to this particular research project. Also discussed are the methodological issues of both research and analysis within the context of conjoining these variant conceptions of "discourse analysis" and "discursive practices."

Theories on Discourse, Power, and Hegemonic Practices in "Development"

This section probes discursive relations of power in institutional situations, with specific reference, where available, to ethnographic studies of development institutions and processes (e.g., Grillo and Stirrat 1997). I will link these power issues to the local context of unequal relations in development projects and processes in and around Udaipur, Rajasthan.

In the political-economic arena of anthropological studies, Gramscian analyses of the discursive nature of *hegemony* are central to contemporary discussions of local-level power relations. Gramsci's terms are important because they "bring out the conflicts and contradictions (...in opposition to determinist, positivist thought) to be found within actual historical situations" (Arnold 1984). Gramscian *hegemony* emphasizes control though persuasion rather than coercion, which is especially critical when one regards the role of the state in constructing structural realities that go unquestioned by its citizens, including prisons and educational institutions (Gramsci 1971).

Gramscian hegemony shares much in common, too, with French structuralist and post-structuralist notions of *ideology* as "lived relations" (Althusser 1971, as stated in Woolard 1998:6) that take place within the distinctly human yet relatively unexamined realm of unquestioned social facts. In Marxism and Literature, Williams (1977) suggests that *ideological hegemony* (again, in the Gramscian sense of the term) is not only produced by elite classes to exercise power over laboring classes. While it is clearly an instrument of control, *ideological hegemony* is also experienced in different ways by elite classes themselves. This important distinction from Marx's writings on ideology as an instrument suggests that the power of ideology in social reproduction actually lies primarily in the fact that it tends to remain hidden from the purview of all within

the society, becoming embedded within and indistinguishable from the institutions and social norms that contain ideological significance.

Similarly, Bourdieu describes *doxa* as a fundamental social experience in which "what is essential goes without saying because it comes without saying" (Bourdieu 1977:167). In other words, doxa refers to the social fact that certain aspects of society and self remain outside the realm of discussion because these aspects become naturalized to the point where they are seen simply as "self-evident" and reflective of "the natural order" (1977:166). He contrasts the world of doxa with that of discourse (1977:168), where the universe of discourse is one "within which everything can be explicitly questioned" (Brow 1996:20). For Bourdieu, *discourse* refers to the actions by which human actors discuss and make clear social formations and relationships that would otherwise remain unquestioned within the realm of social doxa.

Finally (for the purposes of this discussion), Foucault uses the term *discourse* to refer more closely to Althusser's or Williams' *ideology* or Bourdieu's *doxa*. The *dominant discourse* of any social epoch is determined by the specific "will to truth" that is silently and unconsciously held by the members of the society:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (1980:131)

"Truth" is constructed and perpetuated ideologically within the society; and while its construction cannot be specifically located with any particular dominant individual or group, its existence and perpetuation tend, nevertheless, to benefit dominant, elite groups. For Foucault, the ideological power of a dominant discourse within any given society lies precisely in the fact that it remains elusive and typically invisible to the naked eye of any potential observer within the society. Accordingly, the dominant discourse within a society can only be called into question when it is finally found out or seen as a potential instrument of control over a society's masses. In this sense, *discourse* refers to "living" situations where relationships between distinct groups or individuals exist as a dialogue that is constantly defined and redefined though the expression of changing perceptions and intentions (Williams 1977, Guha 1982).

Along with his notions of hegemony, Gramsci's description of the relationship between *subaltern masses* and dominant elite groups has also been regularly employed over the past two decades by historians and anthropologists to focus attention on the alternative perspectives of subordinate classes upon institutions and social events. Gramsci imbues the concept of *subalternity* with the potential for resistance to dominant elite structures when he writes that the:

> theoretical consciousness [of the subaltern worker] can be historically in opposition to his activity. One might almost say that he has two theoretical consciousnesses (or one contradictory consciousness): one which is implicit in his activity and which in reality unites him with all his

> fellow-workers in the practical transformation of the real world; and one, superficially explicit and verbal, which he has inherited from the past and uncritically absorbed. (Gramsci 1971:333)[16]

According to Gramsci, this contradictory consciousness of a "subaltern group of great mass" (Chatterjee 1989: 170):

> may indeed have its own conception of the world, even if only embryonic; a conception which manifests itself in action, but occasionally and in flashes—when, that is, the group is acting as an organic totality. But this same group has, for reasons of submission and intellectual subordination, adopted a conception which is not its own but is borrowed from another group; and it affirms this conception verbally and believes itself to be following it, because this is the conception which it follows in 'normal times'—that is, when its conduct is not independent and autonomous, but submissive and subordinate. (1971:327)[17]

The tensions that derive from the tendencies of a subordinate group to both resist and accede to the persistent exercise of power by a dominant group are precisely those contradictions that define the nature of the state of being "subaltern." As Gautaum Bhadra writes:

> It is well known that defiance is not the only characteristic behaviour of subaltern classes. Submissiveness to authority in one context is as frequent as defiance in another. It is these two elements that together constitute the subaltern mentality. It is on account of this combination that the poor and oppressed have, time and again, and in different histories made voluntary sacrifices in favour of the rich and the dominant, at least as often as they have rebelled against the latter. (1989:54)

The relationship between dominant and subordinate groups, between hegemony through persuasion and hegemony through coercion, and between acquiescence

[16]Quotes are Gramsci 1971, as cited in Chatterjee 1989.

and resistance is at the core of these investigations into subaltern perspectives. Similarly, in his discussion of relations of domination and subordination in a rural Sri Lankan village, James Brow remarks that "Hegemony … is never fully achieved, but is always in a state of contestation" (1988).

Subaltern perspectives on social-historical events and local-level relations in ethnographic studies and in historiographies have been highlighted and examined for their potential to describe discursive power relations between dominant and subordinate groups in South Asia (e.g., Cohn 1985, 1987; Guha 1983; Hardiman 1985; and Scott, 1985 in South-East Asia). These notions of hegemonic discourses are central to my research because the various speech communities included in this study exhibit significantly hierarchical yet shifting power relations with one another. For instance, stemming from their urban intellectual connections, the set of assumptions held by development professionals regarding development issues tend to be colored by their access to information and power centers such as international agencies or government offices. A "local" village community, on the other hand, tends to have less access to information, political connections, or financing that would facilitate development projects in the village. They may be considered, hence, a subaltern group. As village leaders are increasingly exposed to the political avenues of larger development processes, however, they often obtain greater control over the

[17] See footnote number 13, above.

direction and maintenance of the village projects and institutions. In the process, as the dependence of a village upon outside development professionals, or "donors," to provide experience and connections decreases, the "local" community's goals and involvement in development projects may also change to reflect their new-found perceptions and assumptions. Yet, such a power shift is rarely complete or uni-directional. NGO-inspired resistance to existing power structures in the form of Rajput or Brahmin claims to ownership and right to governance may also end up cloaking the need by subordinate groups to maintain formal terms of obedience to the traditional structures in order to survive.

As mentioned by Ferguson in his analysis of the real effects of "development" work on a community in Lesotho, it frequently happens that both "successful" and "failed" NGO projects may actually strengthen the hold that the government or local elites command over a subaltern community (Ferguson 1990). Ferguson writes that "planned interventions may produce unintended outcomes that end up all the same incorporated into anonymous constellations of control -- authorless 'strategies,' in Foucault's sense -- that turn out in the end to have a kind of political intelligibility" (Ferguson 1990). As a result of "development interventions" by government and international agencies in the formerly remote community where he worked, the government was able to extend its control into a mountain region where there existed a strong potential for rebel uprisings to occur. By building roads and a larger governmental infrastructure in

this area, including more police outposts, the government managed to quell the possibility that such an uprising would gain momentum and spread to other areas of the nation. Ferguson clearly points out that the unintended outcomes are the result of "authorless strategies" because no single individual or organization can be shown to have purposely decided to embark on the development projects with the primary intention of tilting the political landscape in favor of the government. Nevertheless, the "anonymous constellations of control" that ultimately bear upon the situation lead to the same conclusion. As a result, every time he uses the term "development" Ferguson chooses to couch it in quotation marks. "Development" is problematic because the resulting change is not necessarily one that only benefits the intended beneficiaries in this rural region. Much of the eventual benefit accrues to the government itself, suggesting that the outcomes of "development" may be multifarious even as they are represented as unilaterally beneficial to "local communities."

This points to another important issue concerning the current direction of "development studies" to which this research proposes to contribute. "Development" as a field of inquiry and action has undergone several transformations within the past forty years. From a field in which the term was almost universally accepted in the West as an unquestioned referent for a process of beneficial change through "modernization" (Myrdal 1968 & 1970, Hirschman 1967), to a field that now includes critics of traditional "development" models

such as Ferguson and Escobar (1991, 1989, 1988) "development studies" has become an area of inquiry whose boundaries and concerns are much less evident. My own approach to using the term and to referring to the field as whole is directly informed and closely aligned with those approaches taken by Ferguson (1990) and Escobar (1988, 1989, 1991, 1992), in which the processes of the "institutionalization" and the "professionalization" of "development" must be viewed critically, especially in light of the widely acknowledged "failure" of traditional, top-down models for social change. Escobar's attention to the potentialities of New Social Movements (NSMs), a term referring to the combined efforts of thousands of local NGOs throughout the world to bring control of the processes of social change into the hands of the subaltern classes has paved the way for further studies that focus on thc relations between NGOs on the one hand and "establishment" aid organizations such as the World Bank or USAID on the other. Working within this paradigm, I examine the varied and similar goals and means for social change pursued by a range of development organizations and institutions.

In a volume titled Discourses of Development, editors Grillo and Stirrat (1997) point to the importance for anthropologists of development, as well as for development practitioners, to recognize "the multiplicity of voices present in the development process" (Grillo:3). Many of the contributors to the volume explore ways in which relationships between development "actors" tend to be

institutionally problematic because they necessarily play out between dominant and subordinate groups, between those who *develop* and those who are *developed*. The keys to the power imbalance always lie in the same place: in the financial power wielded by donor agencies and NGOs over village-level programs, and in the knowledge differential between, again, donor agencies and NGOs on the one hand, and *gariib log* who require new knowledge to improve social and economic conditions in their village on the other. The situation is so glaring that for more than two decades now, development professionals have cultivated a language that seeks to equalize the importance of the various groups in the process of "doing development," emphasizing the creation of *partnerships* in *participatory practices* to achieve *sustainable development* (see especially Chambers 1983). In response to the wave of imagined equality in development processes generated by these well-intentioned attempts to *put the last first,* sociologists and anthropologists working primarily in Britain and Holland have "emphasized the continuing value of 'actor-oriented' approaches to the study of development, arguing that 'an actor-oriented perspective entails recognizing the *multiple realities* and diverse social practices of various actors, and requires working out methodologically how to get to grips with these different and often incompatible worlds'" (Long quoted in Grillo:3).

This investigation contributes to on-going discussions among anthropologists of development by offering a sociolinguistic analysis of the

character and patterns of communication between primary actors in "development."

Sociolinguistic Issues of Discourse and "Language Ideologies"

Until very recently, social theoretical notions of discourse and sociolinguistic notions of discourse have remained somewhat polarized in their interpretive realms. Sociolinguists have tended to restrict their definitions of the term to linguistic analytical frameworks that focused on *discourse* as the specific interactions between individuals within specific cultural contexts. The ideological aspects of discourse examined by social theorists and anthropologists such as those mentioned above tended to be overlooked or subsumed within micro-analyses of specific speech acts (Austin 1962). In the past few years, however, some sociolinguists, including many linguistic anthropologists, have begun to focus their attention on linking micro-analyses of communicative acts with larger social analyses of power imbalances and the ideological power of language in social constructions of reality. Although the research I conducted in rural Rajasthan is not sociolinguistically rigorous and is rather a social analysis that includes examinations of language in use, the section below outlines some pertinent sociolinguistic trends with specific attention to issues that impinge most directly on the study at hand.

Within the field of sociolinguistics, *discourse* refers to the "imprecise and constantly emerging and emergent interface between language and culture"

(Sherzer 1987) experienced in ritualized or "everyday" settings (Psathas 1979). Gumperz's work on discourse strategies (Gumperz: 1982a, 1982b) opened areas of study that focus on the ways that particular speech communities operate with specific sets of assumptions and language that reflect their world view. Issues concerning communicative interference that arise when groups with different knowledge bases and strategies for communicating that knowledge directly interact with one another have been addressed in areas such as doctor-patient relations (Cicourel 1988) and courtroom communication strategies (Gumperz 1982b, Mellinkoff 1963). Communicative interference within institutional contexts has been addressed in relation to education, medical settings, legal settings, and the media (Mehan 1986, Menz 1989), but until now relatively little attention has been given to communicative competence and interference in international development settings. In addition, the studies mentioned above tended to focus primarily on context-specific interactions examined through the lens of conversation analysis. While this approach has yielded important contributions to discussions of how power is exercised bureaucratically in specific situations, the findings within these studies were usually limited in scope to the particular bureaucratic institutions under investigation. Susan Phillips writes:

> With some exceptions, there was little concern in this work with the content of what was said or with the relation between content and the form of the utterance. The emphasis on rules and linguistic form reflected the influence of not only conversation analysis but also formal linguistic theory. But this work stands out as the single most coherent body of

> sociolinguistic work focused on the role of language in the exercise of power done during these decades. (1998:212)

Most recently, a new field of sociolinguistic study has emerged that further explores the relationship between linguistic forms and issues of social ideologies and institutionalized power structures. The edited volume, Language Ideologies (Schieffelin, Woolard, Koskrity eds. 1998), synthesizes the efforts of several prominent linguistic theoreticians to organize and build a coherent framework for this new area of inquiry. Woolard's exhaustive introduction to the volume explores the development toward the convergence of social theoretical with linguistic theoretical investigation into the relationship between language and ideology. She defines "language ideology" as "(r)epresentations, whether explicit or implicit, that construe the intersection of language and human beings in a social world" (1998: 3). She goes on to remark that:

> ideologies of language are not about language alone. Rather, they envision and enact ties of language to identity, to aesthetics, to morality, and to epistemology. Through such linkages, they underpin not only linguistic form and use but also the very notion of the person and the social group, as well as such fundamental social institutions as religious ritual, child socialization, gender relations, the nation-state, schooling, and law. (ibid.: 3)

While ties between language and social formations have long been the subject of sociolinguistic investigation (e.g., Labov 1979, Bauman and Sherzer 1974, Feld and Schieffelin 1981, Gal 1989), this relatively new field of inquiry is more self-consciously and purposefully focused on drawing connections between micro-

analyses of sociolinguistic discursive data with macro-analyses of social movements and discourses of power. Applying some of the general principles of these approaches to interpreting discourse strategies, my research examines the micro-level factors affecting communicative competence or interference in the funding process of NGO projects, focusing on the various word choices, competing linguistic and stylistic forms, and broad conceptualizations of each project and the other groups by each of the speech communities mentioned above. The macro-analysis of my research touches on the implications of the micro-level discourse analysis for the general social and political sphere of development activities in rural Rajasthan.

The development context in and around Udaipur is a particularly rich field for linguistic examination because at least three languages (Hindi, English, and Mewari, the local language) are commonly utilized in day-to-day interactions. The relationship between the language of choice to convey certain ideas and the capacity or incapacity of all participants in the interaction to understand the languages points to power differentials that are often expressed through sorts of code switching. Mewari, the regional language of the former kingdom of Mewar, is spoken by all of the village people in the areas surround Udaipur. The more educated members and leaders of the villages may also speak Hindi, but it is not uncommon to find villages where only a handful of people speak Hindi. The number of rural women who speak Hindi is typically very small in this region.

English is the language of choice for college-educated Indians working in either governmental or non-governmental positions. Nevertheless, Hindi is most widely spoken in most day-to-day NGO settings. English is generally understood to be the language of the elite, and many middle-class, educated Indians can only speak broken, halting English if at all. In gatherings where everyone is known to speak fluent English, English is widely spoken along with Hindi. Those who speak English and Hindi fluently usually tend to make clear choices about which language or how much of each language they should incorporate into the conversation. The issue of code switching among NGO staff is particularly important when one considers that the more educated and "sophisticated" members among the staff are careful not to alienate their non-English-speaking colleagues, especially in the atmosphere of "equality" among partners (especially colleagues) that pervades development discourse.

Expanding upon Goffman's (1974) notion of sociocultural contexts viewed as "frames" in which discourse occurs, Irvine suggests that "A communicative act has relation to other acts, including the past, present, the future, the hypothetical, the conspicuously avoided, and so on; and these relations-- intersecting frames, if you will-- inform the participation structure of the moment" (Irvine 1992). Employing concepts such as "entextualization" and "recontextualization," processes in which a portion of a text may be selected from a particular speech event and then reinserted into another frame and speech event,

Irvine outlines the processes by which a text is transferred and transformed as it moves through intersecting frames, with both Speakers and Hearers tending to alter the text's formal or implied meaning. Although not systematically addressed in this research, these concepts could be useful in describing how singular terms may have multiple meanings for different groups of people, depending upon where they enter a development discourse. For instance, village notions of "development" may be relatively limited or specific when compared with the vast ideological and practical meanings that the term tends to hold for the academically trained "development elite."

Bearing in mind sociolinguistic and social theoretical notions of "discourse," I propose here that if one looks closely and carefully at what and how people speak to one another in politically and socially charged situations, one can better identify and describe many ways that power imbalances are contested, upheld, or, on rare occasions, toppled. This aspect of my analysis is similar to James C. Scott's depiction of what he calls "on-stage" and "off-stage" behaviors in a rural Malaysian village (1985). The typical "on-stage" behavior of the poorer and less powerful people of the village before their local landlords, moneylenders, and government officials is subservient and, at times, even obsequious. Scott suggests, however, that if one hangs around a village long enough, then an observer can eventually become privy to subaltern people's often less than flattering "off-stage" representations of local elite figures. I suggest here that one

may also find *traces* of resistance even in "on-stage" behavior, but one must listen very closely and pay attention to the cues and miscues very carefully in order to perceive these messages as an outsider. Similar to this research project, Scott's project is not sociolinguistic, though he also looks at communication events and processes in order to uncover some expressions of socio-political relations in village settings. To this end, employing some general sociolinguistic analytical tools here to examine language use in socially charged interactions in rural development situations may yield new ways to describe the relationships between vastly divergent groups.

CONVERGING NOTIONS OF DISCOURSE IN A RURAL RAJASTHANI SETTING

As discussed earlier in this chapter, I suggest that the disparate notions of *discourse* are less separate than they are representative of a continuum or spectrum between the social theoretical and linguistic interpretations of the term. At least, this is what I propose when examining and analyzing the ethnographic material of this study, because the experiences and understandings of "discourses of development" by all parties discussed here also seem to exist and shift along a range between the two interpretations of the term. One of the primary findings that emerges from my study is that as individuals and communities become aware, knowledgeable and finally fluent in the language of development practices and concepts, simultaneously the underpinnings of the discursive aspects of unquestioned Development ideologies also tend to take hold within the individual or community. As development terms and linguistic discourses become more

prevalent in day-to-day communications and expressive of certain "development realities" among previously uninitiated villagers, NGO workers and donor representatives, the sinews of Development ideologies of "progress," "partnership," and "participation" also begin to wrap around all who use this language of development. The linguistic and the social dimensions of *development discourse* in this rural Rajasthani setting are ultimately intertwined and are best understood by viewing them as such, and that is the project of this study.

DISCUSSION OF THE REMAINING CHAPTERS

Chapter Two begins the ethnographic portion of the dissertation. The first ethnographic example of development discourse is taken from a series of introductions at what I term "The Big Meeting" in which all of the primary language/power groups of this study were present. The setting is a North American Development Alliance (NADA) visit to the Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan (SVS) NGO in Udaipur for the purpose of monitoring and evaluating an on-going NADA-supported program for promoting female reproductive health in the rural areas. The evaluation centered on a one-day visit "out to the village" where the four-person NADA team (three North Americans and one Indian from Delhi) met with NGO workers and local villagers to assess the success of Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan's Traditional Birth Attendant program. The chapter introduces the primary groups of this study through a close examination of the interaction and the various perspectives and agendas behind the face-to-face

behaviors. A rather lengthy transcription of the first minutes of the meeting provides the grist for the analysis of this chapter. Through a careful reading of the greeting and introduction sequence documented in this chapter, we can also locate many of the primary themes and types of characters that continue to reappear throughout the dissertation.

The analysis in the second chapter centers on the ways that this interaction and others like it tend to be highly constructed performances in which the various actors typically know their roles very well. Yet, as people try to convey some reality within the constructed performance of this highly charged situation, a chaos of missed cues and the bumbling of linguistic and cross-cultural norms seems to reign over the entire scene. The perspectives found within each of the groups of the interaction will be highlighted through close readings of excerpts from the tape-recorded interaction. Examples of code-switching are introduced, through which an analysis of *who speaks what, when, to whom, and in which language* begins to illuminate the ways that language can be representative, expressive, and even constitutive of power differentials.

The third chapter addresses some perspectives on development expressed to me during interviews with *gariib log*, including how people living in villages where NGO-sponsored development work is going on understand and use terms that have become common parlance in development discourse. Since their introduction into *gariib log's* discourse over the past twenty years, these terms

have tended to reach different people in different ways throughout the areas where development projects are being implemented. Perhaps the most significant point here is that the people who actually incorporate these terms into their daily conversations with other *gariib log* tend to be those who have regular and prolonged interactions with NGO employees, especially NGO employees who are based at the Jhilaasana Block headquarters. "Development" or *vikaas* is a somewhat problematic term because its use is still limited primarily to young or middle-aged men who have regular dealings with the NGOs. Older generations and women, in general, have little or no understanding of what *vikaas* refers to in their village.

This chapter will also discuss *gariib log*' attitudes toward NGOs, outsiders, and development, more generally. While some *gariib log* see direct and immediate benefits to be gained from NGO involvement in their communities, many *gariib log* remain untouched by their presence and some have become disaffected due to experience of broken promises or personal conflicts arising from development activities. Similarly, nearly all of the *gariib log* I met in areas where NGO have maintained a strong presence over many years expressed little interest in the now regular visits by the outsiders. The attitude they expressed toward people who come and go like the wind in a blur of jeeps and dust seemed to be increasingly similar to their attitude toward local government officials who come and go in much the same fashion. The novelty of

seeing foreigners in their villages wore off long ago, and their arrival usually signaled another call to perform their *development roles* for the visitors and to carefully demonstrate how much their "awareness" (chetnaa) had increased along with the more mundane improvements in the village.

The fourth chapter focuses on the perspectives on development work expressed to me by NGO professionals and staff (a clear distinction within the organizational hierarchy) working with SVS. Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan employs more than 220 full-time staff; Log Sansthaan has three full-time employees. SVS is one of the most established and well-known NGOs in South Asia working in more than fifty villages in four blocks of southern Rajasthan. This chapter also addresses common patterns of communication within the NGO. In particular, hierarchies and status divisions are discussed with specific reference to their expression in linguistic patterns as viewed in language analyses of the "Big Meeting." As in chapter three, the hierarchies of Mewari, Hindi and English tend to be upheld, with the significant difference that for non-native speakers of Mewari learning the local language tends to be viewed as a sign of strength and commitment to better communicate with the local population. This is, in fact, a fairly uncommon quality, especially among the NGO professionals who were often raised and educated in India's cosmopolitan urban centers such as Delhi and Bombay. The people who speak Mewari most fluently tended to be the mid-level managers and local field staff who have been hired from the local population.

While speaking with *gariib log* in Mewari clearly worked in their favor as they communicated with villagers, most of these mid-level staff had little or no command over English, and this posed a barrier for advancing to higher levels of management where regular communication with outsiders (often foreign) is a requirement of the position. The over-riding ideology of all the NGOs, practiced by each to a greater or lesser extent, is one of equality and participation. It is against this ideal that we examine actual speech practices to see how various styles tend to be more or less successful in furthering this goal among the staff.

The fifth chapter looks at development interactions from the perspective of development professionals at large international donor agencies. Back in Delhi, development professionals work hard to manage heavy bureaucratic loads that afford them little time to get out and see first-hand the effects (good or bad) of the decisions they make. Their frustration with this distance from "the real action in the field" was expressed to me in numerous conversations. The separation between the idealism that drove many of these middle-class urbanites into the field of rural development and the realities of endless trains of project proposals, organizational meetings, and astonishingly brief visits to NGO project sites even prompted more than a few devoted individuals to ultimately choose to get out of the game altogether. The demands of the work and the limited "pay-offs" (the rare instances when one can say with assurance that they did something that really

improved the lives of the people they were trying to help) can also lead to emotional and professional "burn-out."

On the other hand, some people are able to balance the various frustrations with the knowledge that the work they are doing must also be done in order for others to move ahead "on the ground." The people I met who seemed to weather the frustrations best were those who had significant experience working in rural situations with local people for at least a year or more. They tended to feel more secure in their assessments of rural situations, and they also spoke of rural realities less idealistically even if they retained nostalgic memories of their time "in the field." The majority of international development professionals I met were self-conscious, even apologetic, about the power they wield over so many people's lives, but I also met a remarkable minority of aid donors who could be, according to NGO reported speech and my own observations, very cavalier and even offensive in their approach to working with people "in the field."

Chapter five also touches on experiences of expatriates living within the international development community, which occasionally extends to but is more frequently denied to Indian employees of international organizations. As in many Western countries, a professional commitment to social welfare issues is often viewed by Indian middle-class peers and family members as fool-hardy and idealistic with little chance of building a solid financial future for one's family. These pressures combined with egregious differences in pay scales for expatriate

and Indian employees doing similar work in development organizations added fuel to some people's general frustrations with the work and the frequent lack of conclusive outcomes in development project work.

CHAPTER 2: INTRODUCTIONS AT THE "BIG MEETING"

About five months after I arrived in Udaipur, a group of North American development professionals arrived at the Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan (SVS) headquarters to evaluate an on-going reproductive health program funded by the North American Development Alliance (NADA).[1] Because many decisions about whether or not to continue funding typically hinge upon these relatively rare events, these interactions between donors, NGO managers and villagers represent a critical moment in the cycle of a rural development project. By examining the recorded conversations and observations from this "Big Meeting," we begin to understand how SVS employs ritualized performance, perhaps unwittingly, to orchestrate and manage the interactions, especially those between the donor representatives and the villagers, with SVS staff and managers acting as intermediaries. The traditional role of the interview[2] in determining long-term development plans and organizational relationships is complicated here by the unusually large number of participants, the lack of a common language (Hindi, English, and Mewari), and the extraordinary (which is not to say malevolent) efforts by the highly concerned NGO managers to control the information flow

[1] I have chosen to change the names of the organization and the people involved in the interaction in order to respect the need for privacy and anonymity in the process of submitting to an unusually rigorous and almost microscopic analysis of their modes of communication.
[2] See Briggs (1986).

through interpretation and direction of the questioning between donors and villagers. This chapter introduces the primary cast of characters who are the primary actors and informants for the following chapters as well.

"GOING TO THE FIELD"

Two shiny white Ambassador cars, rugged and oversized British-Indian jalopies still manufactured in India, and one Maruti/Suzuki jeep from the SVS garage pulled into the opulent courtyard of the Palace Hotel in Udaipur. The North American team members and their Indian project manager from Delhi were already waiting in the shade of the palace walls with their notebooks and small backpacks in hand. This team of four NADA professionals appeared eager to get out to the villages where they would meet NGO staff and villagers in their efforts to evaluate the progress of Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan's NADA-sponsored female reproductive health program. At 7:30 am, the air was already drying and warming up as the sun crept into the cool courtyard. It was the end of May, and the Hot Season had already peaked at more than 110-118 degrees Fahrenheit, which would continue for at least another month before the monsoon rains soak the Aravali Mountains around Udaipur. The donor representatives mostly chatted amongst themselves and interacted very little with the NGO staff before departing. Laurie Whitcomb, an anthropologist from NADA offices in North America, appeared in the archway to the lobby, and Dr. Narayan, the Indian project manager and medical doctor from NADA's Delhi office, announced in a

friendly yet authoritative tone that "We should get going. It is going to be a long drive, and it won't be getting any cooler."

Being my first attempt to observe such a donor-NGO-village interaction, I nervously introduced myself to the four NADA representatives as an anthropologist and asked if they would mind if I accompany them to tape record and observe their interactions. They glanced at one another, and then they all looked to Dr. Narayan who said that it was fine with her. Dr. Whitcomb, the anthropologist, said, "I certainly don't mind. I guess I'm not really surprised to find another of my kind out here in such a beautiful place."

Relieved, I smiled with them, and then we all began moving toward the vehicles. The NADA representatives were directed by the SVS managers to get into the large Ambassador cars, while I climbed in the back of the jeep with the NGO staff that I knew well by that time. Altogether, we made up a group of fifteen people, including three drivers. Dr. Sharma, the head of Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan's Health Division sat in the front seat of one Ambassador car, while his passengers, Dr. Harold Drumm, Professor Emeritus from the University of Toronto's Obstetrics, Gynecology, Pediatrics, and Reproductive Health Services Departments, and Susan Clark, a Program Director for NADA in Ontario, were seated on the wide, finely upholstered back seat. In the other Ambassador car, Dr. Sharma's second in-charge, Dr. Meena Jain, accompanied Dr. Narayan, the young medical doctor and project manager based in NADA's

Delhi office, and Dr. Whitcomb, a medical anthropologist who specialized in developing and monitoring NADA's female reproductive health programs around the world. I later learned that this was the first visit to India for each of the three North Americans, with the exception of Dr. Drumm, who made a brief visit back in the Fifties when returning from a medical assignment in Southeast Asia. Dr. Whitcomb had read quite a lot about India in anthropological publications, especially concerning traditional medical practices and the relationship between health and local spirits (*bhuut)* that sometimes haunt villagers, especially in Adi-Vasi communities such as the one we would visit that day. In general, each one of the four "outsiders" (a term nearly as applicable in Udaipur for someone from Delhi as it is for a foreign national) appeared to look forward to the experience they were about to embark upon. The NADA representatives seemed initially rather shy with the SVS staff. This may have been due, in part, to the fact that there were two SVS staff to each one of them, and only half of the SVS staff and managers present spoke fluent English.

In the front of the jeep seated next to the Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan driver was Pandey-jii, the SVS Block Director for Jhiilaasanaa Block. He was the most senior person in our jeep, a widely respected manager at the same level as Dr. Sharma. I was in the back of the jeep with eight staff members from SVS. With some difficulty, we all managed to find some room to put our legs among the lunch boxes and water bottles on the floor. While I wondered about the

discussions taking place in the Ambassador cars, I knew that I was really better off in the back of the jeep. I had been allowed to come along on this trip by senior SVS directors (who were not present that day) with the understanding that I should strictly avoid affecting the perceptions or discussions of the NADA visitors. This meant that I should not make myself too available to them, since they might feel tempted to ask me questions about development efforts in the area or about the village we were to visit that afternoon, where I had also been researching since my arrival in Udaipur months earlier. I also understood the relatively precarious position of SVS in this interaction. They had a lot to lose and potentially little to gain from my presence and participation with the donors, so I preferred to maintain some distance from the visitors even if it felt a bit awkward at times. Many eyes from SVS were also watching me that day, prepared to report back to the leadership just how well or how badly I behaved in relation to their organizational interests.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE VISITORS' ARRIVAL

On the road to the tiny village of Leelapur, our destination, much of the discussion in the back of the jeep was about whether or not the SVS staff and villagers would be ready for our arrival there. Three SVS local Block Officers, stationed permanently at the NGO's headquarters in Jhiilaasanaa Block, had gone to Leelapur before dawn to round up as many local village members and SVS Village Health Workers as possible. Many of the men, and some of the women

and children, leave the village very early in the morning to seek day labor nearby or to visit the markets in Jhiilaasanaa. Because NADA had come to evaluate the women's reproductive health program, the SVS Block and Zonal Workers tried to gather as many local village women for the meeting as they could find. Without telephones, contacting the women at their widely dispersed homes would be no small task. While a portion of the road between Jhiilaasanaa and Leelapur was recently paved, one had to turn off the main road and travel on a dirt road the last five miles to reach Leelapur. Locating a sufficient number of local *gariib log* for the meeting (generally considered for such gatherings to be around twenty-five to forty people) was further complicated by the fact that while Leelapur is commonly referred to as a "village," it is actually more a series of tiny hamlets tucked into the hillsides and valleys with only narrow footpaths to join them. The Block and Zonal Workers had to arrive very early in the morning in order to cover all of the hamlets on foot.

Managers at the SVS Headquarters back in Udaipur usually encourage the local staff "in the field" to plan in advance with villagers for these important visits by outsiders. This is often difficult, however, since many *gariib log* will commit to attend a meeting with some intention of going, but then something else arises in the meantime. Sometimes, *gariib log* give their word that they will come, all the time knowing that they already have another commitment, or they simply do not want to go. They usually agree to come, typically preferring to avoid direct

confrontations with people they view as "higher" than themselves, such as NGO managers from Udaipur.

On that particular day, the Block and Zonal Workers managed to gather up about thirty men and women for the meeting. I later saw, however, that nearly half of the people present were not from Leelapur at all. Many of them came from BaNaawaT, another village two miles further up the road where SVS maintained a strong community presence. Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan, in fact, had a much stronger foothold and longer history in BaNaawaT than they traditionally had in Leelapur. Accordingly, I thought that BaNaawaT might have been a more obvious choice to demonstrate the depth of SVS involvement in women's reproductive health, as well as their integrated development projects in the area. BaNaawaT was also one of two primary sites for my village-level research,[3] and I wondered why the SVS managers preferred to bring their visitors to Leelapur. When I asked Pandey-jii, the Block Manager, he replied, "It's too far to go today." This surprised me a bit because I knew that many visitors were regularly taken to BaNaawaT to view other types of SVS-sponsored development work, such as agricultural and community-building activities. Going to BaNaawaT only added about fifteen minutes to a two-hour journey from Udaipur. While trying to make the journey easier for their donor agency guests by renting

[3] I was introduced to BaNaawaT by SVS staff accustomed to bringing outside visitors to that village because of their remarkable project successes. Initially, I was seen by the *gariib log* there

Ambassador cars, I wondered if the chosen location for the visit had been affected by their choice of transportation. Whereas the SVS jeeps could travel easily up to BaNaawaT, the large and lumbering Ambassadors might have had trouble on the rocky and sandy road beyond Leelapur.

I also initially wondered why the meeting would not be held in the nearby village of Suryaapur if time and distance were the main concerns. To reach Leelapur, one must drive past the front door of the home of the SVS Ladies Health Worker in Suryaapur, the same woman upon whom much of the success of the "Big Meeting" would depend. Suryaapur is also a uniquely picturesque village with many shade trees and fields that remain green even in the middle of the Hot Season due to irrigation by the local Brahmin landowner. This Brahmin, however, had allied with another smaller NGO, Bhabhuukaa Sansthaan, which had its block headquarters in his village. Though no reason was given when I asked, I was told by one of the SVS block-level staff well acquainted with the local power dynamics of the village that a decision was taken that it would be best to hold the meeting in nearby Leelapur.

Apparently, the SVS Block and Zonal Workers could not locate enough *gariib log* within Leelapur who were perhaps interested or felt sufficient allegiance to Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan to show up for the meeting. Demonstrating to the NADA evaluation team a loyal following among locals and

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as an SVS colleague. During the several months preceding the "Big Meeting," I managed to

significant presence in the region would be necessary to receive continued funding for their projects. So, they convinced several households of women along with a few men from BaNaawaT to make the two-mile trek on foot to Leelapur early in the morning in order to be in place before our party arrived in the village.

INTRODUCTIONS AT THE "BIG MEETING"

Having stopped for about ten minutes to locate and pick up the Ladies Health Worker in front of her home in Suryaapur, our two cars and the jeep at last roared into the tiny village of Leelapur at around 10:30 am. Those of us riding in the jeep were already feeling hot, dusty and cramped from the bouncy ride. Although their journey was much more spacious and less gritty, the three North Americans were much less accustomed to such travel, and they looked at least as weary as the rest of us. Dr. Narayan, who had lived and worked for several years in a similar NGO in another part of Rajasthan several years before, appeared the most eager and lively among our group of "outsiders," including the SVS hosts from the Headquarters. Dr. Narayan seemed quite at ease with her surroundings, and she said little as she stepped out of the car. On the other hand, judging from the rather stunned looks on their faces as they gazed around at the parched land and mud huts of the village, Laurie Whitcomb, the anthropologist, may have been speaking for her colleagues as well when she exclaimed, "Wow! We're really here!"

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overcome some of that perception by repeatedly showing up there unaccompanied by SVS staff.

About twenty people, including several women holding babies, had already settled into the shade of the verandah of the small building where the meeting was to be held. As the morning air warmed, a distracting smell of livestock and human feces rose up from the fields below. Dr. Sharma, Director of the SVS Health Division and the person clearly in charge of this gathering, initiated a series of introductions between the *gariib log* and their foreign visitors that lasted for about ten minutes. He immediately placed himself at the center of the meeting, leading the introductions, directing the conversation, and making decisions, most of which were probably only semi-conscious, about the information that should be translated or should remain untranslated. The information and comments that he did translate were sometimes re-interpreted to favorably impress his foreign visitors. The hierarchy determining who is allowed to speak, and how and when one should participate in the interaction was quickly and clearly demarcated. Dr. Sharma controlled of the flow of information, and other people present did not usually challenge his authority. The interaction was so lopsided that it could hardly be termed a "conversation"; it was rather more a series of statements interspersed with pragmatic questions and short responses. As we shall see below, however, Dr. Sharma was also thrown off his loquacious direction by the same confusion and misinformation that eventually affected nearly everyone at the meeting.

Of the forty or so people crowded into the verandah, only eight people could have possibly understood more than fifty percent of what was said due to the constant language shifting between Hindi, Mewari and English. The key to understanding at least half of the statements uttered was to possess a strong command of Hindi and English, at a minimum. The eight people included six staff members from the SVS Udaipur offices (Dr. Sharma, Dr. Meena Jain, Ritu, Jaffer-jii, Pandey-jii, and Dr. Joshi, who is a recent addition to the SVS Health Unit), one representative from NADA (Dr. Narayan), and myself. All of the other people present at the meeting could speak only English or only Hindi/Mewari. Those people in the group who could speak Hindi but no English also understood and spoke Mewari, but many people speak only Mewari and understand little or no Hindi at all, especially among the women in the group.

The most obvious and fundamental obstacle to comprehension in any interaction is not being able to speak the language or languages used by the speakers. While development interactions that include three distinct linguistic communities such as those at the "Big Meeting" are relatively rare, miscommunication frequently results when they do occur.

This following sections examine what those participants who cannot switch with facility between Hindi, English, and Mewari may have understood during the introductory phase of the "Big Meeting." The group that received the least amount of information and attention were the villagers who only could only

speak Mewari, even though they were the majority of people present and the main people being introduced. The other group that had a difficult time following what was happening was the group of North Americans who, in spite of the attention paid to their presence, were often assumed to have understood portions of the interaction that they could not possibly have understood. After examining two incomplete versions of the introduction phase of the meeting, one in Mewari as heard by the villagers and one in English as heard by the North Americans, we turn to the complete text of the interaction that includes all three languages, exposing new understandings of dynamics and intentions that could only have been apparent to the eight individuals mentioned above who speak and understand all of the languages exhibited here.

SAMAJH MEN AAYAA? : (YOU UNDERSTAND?)

The *gariib log* who could speak little or no Hindi and no English at all would have had a very difficult time comprehending what was happening, or even the purpose of the meeting with the foreigners. Because there was very little Hindi spoken except for that directed to the *gariib log*, we also see from this transcription how little most of the NGO staff present who spoke little or no English would have also understood. What follows are the excerpted Mewari and simple Hindi comments, commands and asides that came up within this introductory interaction and which would have likely been understood by the non-English-speaking people in the crowd:

*Language key:

- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***
- ***…???…???:*** unintelligible portions of conversation (mostly English)

Original Text	English Translation
Pandey (SVS Block Dir.): ***aaii jaao, bhaii, maaine aaii jaao.***	Pandey (SVS Block Dir.): ***Come, bhaii[4], come inside.***
SVS local Village Health Worker: ***calo, aaii jaao maaine*** (waving a few *gariib log* men into the verandah)	SVS local Village Health Worker: ***Let's go, come on inside.*** (waving a few *gariib log* men into the verandah)
Dr.S: **aap sisTar hain, na?** (to the young woman recently arrived in Leelapur as the Government-appointed Assistant Nurse/Midwife or "ANM")	Dr. S: **You are a nurse, right?** (to the young woman recently arrived in Leelapur as the Government-appointed Assistant Nurse/Midwife or "ANM")
Pandey: **ye sisTar hain, ye sisTar hain,** (pointing to two young women and a young man sitting together with their backs against the wall) **ye sisTar hain-naii posTing huuii hai.**	Pandey: **She is a nurse, he is a nurse,** (pointing to two young women and a young man sitting together with their backs against the wall) **she is a nurse- (her) new posting has (recently) happened.**

[4] *Bhaii* is a common form of address both in Hindi and Mewari. Literally meaning "brother," the term can either connote familiarity and equality between friends or family; or it may instead connote that the person being addressed is lower in a hierarchical structure than the person addressing him. For instance, in the latter case, a waiter in a restaurant or a farmer at a bus stop may be called by a customer or driver as "Bhaii" or "Bhayaa."

Dr. S (a little surprised): **acchaa.** …*????*….	Dr. S (a little surprised): **Oh, ok.** … *???* ….
Dr. Jain (female Dr. from SVS): **thoRe der baahar le jaao** (to *gariib log* woman with a crying baby in her arms)	Dr. Jain (female Dr. from SVS): **Take (him) a little outside.** (to *gariib log* woman with a crying baby in her arms)
Dr. S: ...*?????***…** (aside, to his assistant, Jaffer-jii) **bhaii, daaii maan koun-kounsii hain?** (then to the crowd) **haath uThaa den**	Dr. S: **...***????* **…** (aside, to his assistant, Jaffer-jii) **bhaii, who all are the midwives?** (then to the crowd) **Raise (your) hands.**
Jafferjii: **daai maan haath uThaao**	Jafferjii: **Midwives, raise (your) hands.**
Dr. Jain: **daaii maan**	Dr. Jain: **Midwives.**
(At this point, Dr. Sharma goes on at some length in English.)	(At this point, Dr. Sharma goes on at some length in English.)
Dr. S: - … ??????…..— (to the community health worker) **kitne saal?** (The man holds up four fingers.) **caar saal ho gyee, tumhen?** (again, to his foreign visitors) … ????….	Dr. S: - … ?????….--(to the community health worker) **How many years?** (The man holds up four fingers.) **You have four years (here)?** (again, to his foreign visitors) … ???? ….
Dr. Jain (from SVS, speaking	Dr. Jain (from SVS, speaking

to the community health worker): ***aThiine aaii jaao, aaii jaao, maiine aaii jaao, bhaii. aaii jaao maiine baiTho, anh?***	to the community health worker): ***Come over here, come. Come inside, bhaii. Come inside, sit down, eh?***
Dr. S: …*????*… **moThaa, moThii daaii maan.** …*????* ….	Dr. S: ….???? … **elder**(male gender agreement)**, elder** (female gender agreement) **midwife.** … ???? ….
Dr. S: …*????*…. [(aside to himself) **unhh, uske paas**] …*???*… **idhar aao, bhaii,** *Baxii-jii, Kishanlal-jii.* (pointing to Baxii-jii,) *???. Baxii-jii… Kishanlal-jii.* …*???*… **kitne hain***?* …*???*... **TraDishanal barTh aTenDanTs ye kitne hain, TraDishanal? Ritu?**	Dr. S: … *????*…. [(aside to himself) **unhh, with him**] …*????*… **Come here, bhaii,** *Baxii-jii, Kishanlal-jii.* (pointing to Baxii-jii,) *??? Baxii-jii… Kishanlal-jii.* …*???*… **How many***?* …*???*…**How many Traditional Birth Attendants, Traditional? Ritu?**
Ritu (Ladies Health Worker Trainer from SVS Udaipur Headquarters): **is jon men to paanc hain,** …???… **biis hain.**	Ritu (Ladies Health Worker Trainer from SVS Udaipur Headquarters): **In this zone there are five,** …???… **there are twenty.**
Dr. S: … ??? …**jonal** *warkar…???…***jonal** *warkar?*	Dr. S: … ???**Zonal** *Worker …???…* **Zonal** W*orker?*
Jaffer-jii: **woh Neemghar men.**	Jaffer-jii: **He is in Neemghar.**

Dr. S: …*???*…*???*… (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **kyon? yeh kamyuniTii cenTar hai, na?**	Dr. S: …*???*…*???*… (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **Right? This is the community center, isn't it?**
Jaffer-jii: **jii.**	Singh-jii: **Yes.**
Dr. S: …*???*…***"bhajans"***, …*???*….	Dr. S: …*???*… ***"prayers"***, …*???*….
Dr. S: …*???*…(to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **vilaj helth kamiTi membarz *hain*, yahaan?**	Dr. S: …*???*…(to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **Are there any Village Health Committee members here?**
Baxii-jii (to Singh-jii, a local leader of Leelapur): **kaun hai, Singh-jii?**	Baxii-jii (to Singh-jii, a local leader of Leelapur): **Who is here, Singh-jii?**
Singh-jii: **jii saahab. woh, pahale to Mohan-jii Tailor bhii *haa*, baakii to...**	Singh-jii: **Yes, sir. He, before Farooq-jii Ahmed *was* also there, and the rest, well…**
Baxii-jii: ***naii, paN,* kaun-kaun hain, in men se?**	Baxii-jii: ***No, but,* who all is here, among these?**
Another *gariib log* man: **aaye naii...**	Another *gariib log* man: **They did not come…**
Singh-jii: ***kare, MoThiilal aayo, kare?***	Singh-jii: ***Why, did MoThiilal come?***
Dr. Sharma: (impatiently)	Dr. Sharma: (impatiently) **He**

khaR rahaa hai, ho khaRke, dekh lo, baahar. …*???*….	**is around. Get up and go take a look, outside.** …*???*….
(A rather long period goes by, about two minutes, spoken only in English.)	(A rather long period goes by, about two minutes, spoken only in English.)
(In back, someone says to ANMs: **haath milaao!**)	(In back, someone says to ANMs: **Bring your hands together to greet them!**)
Dr. Sharma*:* …*???*…(to a government ANM he had met previously) **woh, kab? aaj aayii? yuun?**	Dr. Sharma*:* …*???*…(to a government ANM he had met previously) **Her, when? Today she came? Is that it?**
ANM 1: **haan**	ANM 1: **Yes.**

Nearly one-half of all comments and questions directed to the *gariib log* are commands to: "come inside", "take the (crying) baby out," "Midwives, raise your hands," "come over here," and "raise your hands to greet our guests." Most of the remaining questions to the *gariib log* place them in a position from which they should try to defend themselves, either as a group or as an individual: "who are all the midwives?" "how many years (have you been with us)?" "Are there any Village Health Committee members here?" ("Where are they, or don't you have any in this village?") "Did MoThiilal come?" "Get up and look for him." Just from this brief explication of what has transpired in Mewari or plain Hindi, we can clearly see how this meeting was likely shaping up to be a rather unpleasant experience for the *gariib log* that chose, in many cases, to walk more than a mile to attend the gathering.

Beyond this negative tone and series of questions and answers, one of the few points that Dr. Sharma tried to convey to the NADA representatives that was also understood by the *gariib log* concerned the community center. In the middle of making introductions, Dr. Sharma points to the building in which the group was sitting, and then he states with pride to the NADA representatives that:

> *This is the building, aah, constructed, uh, by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan plus these village peoples themselves. By their contribution, we have constructed.*

Suddenly, switching to Hindi, Dr. Sharma checked his facts with his assistant after already making the claim to his foreign guests:

> Dr. S: (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **Right? This is the community center, isn't it?**
>
> Jaffer-jii: **Yes.**

Since this portion of the conversation was in Hindi, most of the *gariib log* would have understood only this part of his reference to the building where they were seated. As it turns out, Dr. Sharma and Jaffer-jii, his assistant, were not correct. They were, in fact, sitting on the verandah of a house owned by a local Bhil farmer, Bhop-jii, who had acquired enough land and money so that he could afford to keep this second small, mud home for his family. Practically speaking, his home also served as the community center for most meetings in Leelapur, including SVS meetings and events. Nevertheless, SVS had no role in building or maintaining the house as a community center. Of course, he said this in order to

impress his guests, and the NADA representatives would have had no reason to doubt that what he said was true. Yet, a quiet confusion among the crowd of villagers ensued from his comment. None of the *gariib log* present protested Dr. Sharma's completely incorrect statement. They may have felt shy to challenge any part of what he said to the foreigners because they could not otherwise understand anything that he said about their village and themselves.

Immediately following this awkward communication, another confusion arose, this time regarding the Village Health Committee. At this point, we can see that some of the *gariib log* may have been getting a bit fed up with what they were hearing and the general lack of attention paid to them:

> Dr. S: …*???*…(then to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **Are there any Village Health Committee members here?**
>
> Baxii-jii (to Singh-jii, a local panchayat and SVS leader of Leelapur): **Who is here, Singh-jii?**
>
> Singh-jii: **Yes, sir. He, before Farooq-jii Ahmed *was* also there, and the rest, well…**
>
> Baxii-jii: ***No, but,* who all is here, among these?**
>
> Another *gariib log* man: **They did not come…**

Perhaps realizing from the lack of confirmation or the rather sudden silence falling upon the crowd that he may be off-track here, Dr. Sharma eased out of his discussion of the Community Center and opened the topic of the Village Health Committee. But this time, before discussing the Committee or opening the topic

with his guests in English, Dr. Sharma asked one of his Health Educators in Hindi if any of the members are present. The Health Educator, in turn, asks Singh-jii, the local traditional healer who knows all of the people in Leelapur who, like himself, have chosen to work with SVS. Singh-jii quietly replies with an affirmative opener to a basically negative response: "**Yes, sir. He, before Farooq-jii Ahmed *was* also there, and the rest, well…**" Perhaps hoping to avoid disappointing his employers, Singh-jii reluctantly addressed the question with an indirect response alluding to Village Health Committee members who might have earlier planned to come, but who were no longer present at the meeting. At this point, however, another village man in the back of the crowd who had not been introduced and would remain so throughout the meeting spoke up in a clear and sharp voice: "**They did not come…**" The man's reply was so loud and blunt that it suggested to me that he was getting fed up with the inaccuracies and interrogations in this interaction between Dr. Sharma and the villagers.

Dr. Sharma's interrogatory questioning and his erroneous comments about the building did not reflect a strong sense of "partnership in development." From the viewpoint of the Bhil *gariib log* present at the meeting, they may have wondered why they were asked to be there except to provide bodies for a symbolic show of support for SVS activities in their village. While their presence was necessary to impress the visiting donor representatives, the *gariib log* were

essentially ignored and even disrespected through the lack of sensitivity displayed by Dr. Sharma and some of the other SVS staff.

In rural Rajasthan, attitudes and behaviors such as those exhibited by SVS staff toward the *gariib log* at the "Big Meeting" are not uncommon, although they are rarely intentional. Many NGO staff from various organizations, not only SVS, feel compassion and concern for the rural people with whom they work in these development projects. Dr. Sharma is, in fact, one of very few medical professionals who have chosen to work full-time for an NGO even in his retirement from government service. His personal commitment to help people in whatever ways he can was evident to me from our very first meeting. Similarly, many of the other doctors and staff who work in the SVS Health Division are remarkable both for their professional skills and for their sensitive, honest approaches to working with *gariib log* within their areas of specialization. I believe that the roots of many of the negative and condescending attitudes expressed in this particular interaction, however, are grounded in a more structural problem. Basically, the SVS staff was under tremendous pressure to host their donor agency guests well, to present their progress and shortcomings in a balanced and true manner, and, finally, to secure future funding from the donors by convincing them that the SVS Health Division efficiently provides needed services and education for rural residents. Under the strain of such intense and sometimes contradictory demands, the staff may become distracted from

balancing their attentions and respect between the foreign visitors (or "outsiders") and the *gariib log* with whom they regularly work.

One might suppose, then, that the attitudes reflected in the transcription above may often lie just below the surface of their regular interactions even if they do not always come to the surface, as they have in this case where the actors are under pressure to perform well; however, these situations are usually more complicated than a straightforward interpretation would allow. Each NGO has within its organization many different types of people with varied backgrounds, motivations, and approaches to development work. In my experience, purely altruistic motivations and attitudes toward *gariib log* and their own work co-exist alongside personal, "baggage"-ridden motivations within the minds of most people working in NGOs. These issues are explored in greater depth in Chapter Four, when we look specifically at some NGO staff's perspectives on development interactions.

The difference in tone and content between the English-speaking versions of the conversation from those of the Mewari-speaking versions is pronounced. Whereas the *gariib log* who speak no English and little Hindi rather may have sensed that they were under interrogation, the North American visitors heard Dr. Sharma boasting of his health team and government ties in Leelapur and surrounding areas.

By extracting only the English portions of the interaction, we can see how confusing the introductions to both the people and places of Leelapur must have felt to the three North American visitors:

*Code-switching key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***…???…???:*** unintelligible portions of conversation (mostly Hindi/Mewari)

Dr. Sharma: *Come, come.* (to visitors)

Pandey-jii: **… sisTar ??? … sisTar ???,** (pointing to two young women and a young man sitting together with their backs against the wall) **?? sisTar ???? …**

Dr. S (a little surprised): **acchaa.** *He is also ANM, from the government.*

Dr. S: *...and five of them, these traditional birth attendants trained by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan, are* **…** (aside, to his assistant) **????** (then to the crowd) **????**

Susan Clark (NADA Prog. Dir., taking notes): *Aah haa…*

Dr. S (counting raised hands): *One, two, three, four, five. They are in this* **jone***, not in entire block, but in this* **jone***, they are working here.*

Dr. Narayan (from NADA, Delhi office): *In this "zone."* (translating for her colleagues)

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. Harold Drumm: *hmmm…*

Dr. S: *Yes, in this particular <u>part</u> of the block.*

Clark: *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: - *They are there, five. And these are the health workers, actually, village health workers.* (pointing and counting the local VHWs) *One, two, three. And he is the community health worker. Means, superior to them. He was formerly health worker after, say, a certain period, but now—* (to the community health worker) **????** (The man holds up four fingers.) **?????** (again, to his foreign visitors) *After four years, he is named as community health worker.*

Dr. S: *Four years of working, after that, he has been named as community health worker. Similarly, in these Traditional Birth Attendants, we are thinking of now having* **moThaa, moThii daaii maan.** *Means, elder. And a Traditional Birth Attendant, who has, uh, who has get dou.., uh, who were there in the four years, for four years she has worked. His job is to join hands with them, the junior one, and tries to bring him up to his own level.*

Clark (smiling): *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm. <u>mmm</u>-hmmm...*

Dr. S: *He had been a good worker, so he tries to bring his compa...adjoining area to his level, and just helping.* [(aside to himself) **????**] *So that is there. And, uh, you know, he is our health educator, he is also helping.* **?????** *Baxii-jii, Kishanlal-jii.* (pointing to Baxii-jii,) *He is health educator here. Block health educator. Baxii-jii, and another, Kishanlal-jii. Both, two of them. There are about,* **???***? sixty-six? sixty village health*

workers working in this entire block. And **TraDishanal barTh aTenDanTs ???? , TraDishanal? Ritu?**

Ritu (Ladies Health Worker Trainer from SVS Udaipur Headquarters): **????,** *allover* **????.**

Dr. S: *Twenty.*

Ritu: *Twenty.*

Dr. S: *Twenty in the block, but in this* ***jone*** *fives…*

Baxiijii: *Five…*

Clark (as she rapidly jots down notes): *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: *And* **jonal** *worker, where is* **jonal** *worker?*

Dr. S: *oh, in another village. He is there, he will be meeting him there.* **lekin**, *but the coordinator, Block Coordinator is here. He is here. Panelaal Singh-jii?* (two *gariib* women say "PanelaalSingh-jii," then three people suddenly cough) *And above them, of course, Pandey-jii is there* (Pandey-jii smiles a slight laugh).

Dr. Drumm: *Yes*.

Dr. S: *So this is them, and few of them, they are the ladies here, the local ladies. This is the village known by the name "Leelapur."*

(Several women, including Ritu, Dr. Jain, a few *gariib* women,

and many men all say together, “Leelapur, Leelapur.”)

Clark: *Unh-hunh.*

Dr. S: *Leelapur.*

Dr. Whitcomb (writing in her notebook): *“Leela…”*

Dr. S: *And this is the building, aah, constructed, uh, by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan plus these village peoples themselves. By their contribution, we have constructed.* (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **???? kamyuniTii cenTar ???, na?**

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: *This is their community center. And this, you have seen that platform there?* (pointing to a raised stage-like platform at the center of the village)

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: *That big- There their meetings, they are held. That is, that is also constructed with the help of the people by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. When they found that the people are very much eager, and they want to cooperate. So, this, their demand, their need was that they should have a common place where they can sit and talk about their upliftment of their village upliftment.*

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: *And there they perform some meetings and certain type of, say,“**bhajans**”, what you call, prayers and other things. Joint*

pray- prayers.

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*

Dr. S: *So this is the picture of the village. And these are the, of course, the…*(to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **vilaj helth kamiTi membarz ?????**

(Some conversation ensues, but he does not take up the discussion of the Village Health Committee members. Clark continues taking notes, and she may have noticed the confusion surrounding the issue. Dr. Narayan, whose first language is Hindi, certainly noted the absence of the Committee members.)

Dr. Sharma: (impatiently) **????** *And he is the, un, umm,* (very slowly now) *traditional, unh, healer.*

(All three North Americans, especially Dr. Whitcomb, the anthropologist, look up at the man standing outside the verandah with interest.)

Dr. Jain: *home remedy…*

Dr. Whitcomb: (with interest) *Oooh.... Oh, I see...*

Dr. Sharma: - *Traditional healer. Uh, he is maintained by us actual,*
[Dr. W: *unh-hunh*.]
he has joined hands. He is illiterate.
[Clark: *unh-hunh*.]
But he knows about the traditional medicine.
[Dr. W: *ooh...*]
[Clark: *unh-hunh*.]
So we want to revive, uh, this, what you call this native medicine.

Dr. W. and Clark (at same time): *mm-hmm*.

Dr. W: *And he uses herbal medicines?*

Dr. S: *Pardon? Herbal medicines. Of course. He is using most of the herbal medicines. He is very liked by the people.*
[Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.]
But illiterate, of course.
[Clark and Dr. W simultaneoulsy: *mm-hmm.] But, still he is doing it: health education, he is doing it. And jointly we work.*
(then pointing to the three nurses he already introduced) *The ANMs, the government ANMs.*

[C./Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.]

Dr. S: *You know, I told you that we have very good rapport with them.*

(A command from someone in the back, then the three government ANMs put their hands together in a traditional greeting to the visitors.)

Clark: *Yes, you did tell me. And it is very good to see everyone joined here to be with us.*

Dr. Drumm: *Yes.*

Dr. Sharma*: Yes, yes. <u>Jointly</u> we work. She has joined recently.*
(to a government ANM he had met previously) **?????, ????**

By introducing selected people from the crowd, Dr. Sharma made clear distinctions between the people who figure prominently in their programs and the rest of the *gariib log* who quietly sat waiting for something, perhaps not sure

what, to happen. From reading just the English text, we can see that Dr. Sharma was, in fact, engaged in what amounts to a monologue. His first comment was one of surprise at the fact that one of the men sitting near the front of the crowd is actually a "Sister" or nurse,[5] also referred to as an "ANM" (Assistant Nurse/Midwife). The traditional gender roles for the position are apparent from the informal term, "Sister," that many people, especially doctors, use to refer to the people who are posted by the state government to live and work in often remote villages throughout India. Having worked as a government doctor for more than thirty years himself, Dr. Sharma is intimately familiar with their responsibilities and the important role that a good ANM can play in maintaining the primary health of villagers living within their assigned area. That a man should be posted to the area in this capacity is rather uncommon. Dr. Sharma does not address the man directly, in spite of his surprise, which implies, too, that he may be unsure of how to address a *man* working in a traditionally female role within the field of health that he considers his personal domain. In any case, he did not spend much time on the issue and proceeded to introduce the SVS health staff to his visitors.

Beyond simply presenting his staff, Dr. Sharma also referenced throughout his series of introductions the place where each individual was located within the hierarchy and chain of command. For example, he said:

1. And he is the community health worker. Means, superior to them.

[5] Substituting the term "Sister" for nurse has almost certainly come from experiences with Catholic nuns and missionaries (both foreign and Indian) who, for more than a century, have worked on rural and urban health issues throughout India. A case in point would obviously be Mother Theresa working in Calcutta.

2. *… we are thinking of now having* **moThaa, moThii daaii maan.** *Means, elder.*

3. *His job is to join hands with them, the junior one, and tries to bring him up to his own level.*

When he mentioned their plans for creating a new level of village health worker, MoThii Daaii Maan, implicit in Dr. Sharma's suggestion may be the notion that further differentiation and hierarchical splitting of responsibilities also indicate a positive progression and growth of the SVS rural health programs. The role of MoThii Daaii Maan would be to supervise over the other Daaii Maan of several villages, training them and "bring(ing) him up to his own level." The pronoun switch here between "her" and "him" in his reference to the categorically female role of Midwife is paralleled in his initial reference to the senior or "elder" Daii Maan as "MoThaa" rather than "MoThii" Daaii Maan. The "aa" ending of the adjective "moThaa" signals a masculine agreement with the noun it is describing, in this case "Daaii Maan." This would indicate to a careful listener of Hindi that the Daaii Maan is male, not female. I would not like to make too much of this rather common gender agreement mistake in Hindi alone; but when Dr. Sharma repeated the same gender pronoun mistake in English, referring to "his job" and "his level," and we then recall his surprise that a man could become a "sister," we may be led to suspect that he may regularly, even if unconsciously, associate higher rank and status as inherently belonging to a male or masculine domain. This is not at all uncommon among men his age throughout Rajasthan or much of India, for that matter. In fact, I felt that Dr. Sharma was remarkably sensitive to changing attitudes concerning gender roles for both men and women, given the

fact that he has spent more than forty years working within the State bureaucracy as a physician and district-level manager of state health programs. His sensitivity and awareness of changing roles was evidenced by the fact that the number two person in his Division is Dr. Meean Jain, a medical doctor herself, who oversaw most of the routine activities of the staff, including nearly all manner of activities for her female-oriented staff and "ladies" rural health programs.

What should be perhaps emphasized in this discussion of pronoun switching in the context of this interaction is that the donor agency audience may have become confused at this lack of pronoun consistency. If, on the one hand, this is true, then the switching may have contributed to a general feeling, particularly among the three North Americans, of becoming overwhelmed with comments, introductions and information in a setting that is quite unfamiliar to them. If, on the other, they were not confused by the pronoun switching, and they actually realized that he was simply mistaking the male pronoun for the female, then they may also, if even only unconsciously, have begun to form an idea that the SVS hierarchy is, in reality, gender biased with men at the top. In particular, Dr. Narayan was most likely to have noticed these mistakes, understanding as she did both English and Hindi; and as a female physician herself, she would almost certainly have confronted these sorts of traditional attitudes among older male colleagues in the past. (She later confirmed the same to me in another conversation.) These kinds of mistakes do not often find their way into the official records and notes of these meetings, but they do tend to color the impressions of the interaction formed by various participants. The nearly

unconscious or semi-conscious perceptions formed in these sorts of remarkably brief interactions are, in fact, critical to the overall impressions that the investigators/guests take away with them. Because they have so little time or real experience of a program upon which to base their eventual findings and recommendations for funding, even the most minute informational mis-cue or simple grammatical mistake has the potential, once perceived by a particularly skeptical donor representative, to become interpreted as an attempt to hide or re-cast the actual situation of an NGO program. No matter whether these sorts of slip-ups simply lead to confusion or are rather taken by interpreting donor representatives as indicators of deeper, darker organizational realities within the NGO, miscommunication such as this certainly does not help to put the "outsider" visitors at ease, nor does it contribute positively to the general picture that the donor representatives would piece together in their minds.

For experienced donor representatives, Dr. Sharma's emphasis on organizational hierarchy could also highlight how the SVS Health Division was patterned after state government health organizations and departments. Although most donors would not perhaps consider him when reflecting on their visits to "the field," I have found Bourdieu's (1991) notion of "symbolic capital" to be useful for interpreting these associations of hierarchy as a particular manner for exercising power. Bourdieu writes that:

> Symbolic capital – another name for distinction – is nothing other than capital, of whatever kind, when it is perceived by an agent endowed with categories of perception arising from the incorporation of the structure of its distribution, i.e. when it is known and recognized as self-evident. Distinctions, as symbolic transformations of *de facto* differences, and, more generally, the ranks, orders, grades and all the other symbolic

> hierarchies, are the product of the application of schemes of construction which … are the product of the incorporation of the very structures to which they are applied; and recognition of the most absolute legitimacy is nothing more than an apprehension of the everyday social world as taken for granted, an apprehension which results from the almost perfect coincidence of objective structures and incorporated structures. (p. 238)

Within the context of Southern Rajasthan, and especially in the rural areas, one "group" that retains an inordinate amount of symbolic capital at its disposal is the Government of Rajasthan (GoR) in all its various forms and functions. The distinctions between GoR officials and people who have no official state government titles or responsibilities, in spite of any other form of power or prestige they may hold, are clear for all to behold. A young NGO man working at the SVS Headquarters once told me that *Sarkar men jaanaa sab se baRiyaa baat hai, lekin agar sarkar men nahin ja sake to en ji o men aanaa Thiik hai* ("The best thing is to go into the Government, but if you cannot go into the Government then getting into an NGO is all right"). According to Bourdieu's formulation, the hierarchical structure of the GoR, in which the status and "place" of each functionary from the Chief Minister of the State right down to the ANM or "sister" working in Leelapur is clearly defined in relation to one another, reflects the "distinctions, … and, more generally, the ranks, orders, grades and all the other symbolic hierarchies" of the social and symbolic landscape of rural Southern Rajasthan. The histories of hierarchical and status relationships run long and deep in the collective consciousness of all, rural and urban, who have lived in the region for more than a generation;[6] and, hence, they represent powerful

[6] Some new-comers to the region, including NGO staff and professionals from places like Bombay and Delhi, do not subscribe at all to the traditional Rajasthani views on hierarchy and the predominance of a few over all the rest. In the past generation, too, the Sarkar or GoR has, of

symbols for whosoever may appropriate them so long as "they are perceived and recognized as legitimate" (ibid. 230). This situation, in which "recognition of the most absolute legitimacy is nothing more than an apprehension of the everyday social world as taken for granted," describes well how (in Bourdieu's words) the *doxic* power of the GoR defines many modern power relationships between unequal groups and communities of Southern Rajasthan.

The Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan jeeps had emblazoned on their doors and on a special license plate on the front and back a special organizational symbol that rather resembled in shape and design those symbols used by the Government of Rajasthan. In fact, the only significant difference that one can perceive when viewing these jeeps from a distance of several yards or more is that the SVS symbol is blue while the GoR symbol is red. Similarly, Dr. Sharma demonstrated throughout his introductory monologue that the Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan Health Division is as highly organized as their Government counterparts. Each person knows their place and to whom they must report ("*Means, superior to them").* By aligning their organizational structure and even their organizational symbols with those of the GoR, Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan may have been attempting to associate legitimacy for their own activities and projects with those normally associated with Government projects. Emphasizing his SVS Health Division's strong informal yet practical ties with the GoR local workers, Dr. Sharma also said in another introduction:

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course, supplanted the British colonial administration as the most powerful and prestigious force within what was once "Mewari" society.

The ANMs, the government ANMs. You know I told you that we have very good rapport with them.

This approach, however, to legitimizing SVS work through associations with governmental symbols of power is not at all uniform throughout the organization. In fact, very often the same people, such as Dr. Sharma, who perhaps semi-consciously align SVS structures and work with those of the GoR in one situation, may in another situation seek to organizationally distance themselves as far from the GoR as possible. We will also examine in Chapter Three how different backgrounds and experiences of individuals working in NGOs such as Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan also play an integral role in determining just how conscious or unconscious these sorts of alliances or allusions to the GoR as a source of symbolic power may be. With Dr. Sharma, as a former career officer within the medical arm of the GoR, unconscious or semi-conscious references and implicit claims to legitimacy vis-à-vis the GoR would be expected to arise more frequently in his conversations or monologues. Younger NGO employees who have been educated at, for example, Rural Management Institutes throughout India are much less likely to utter such comparisons unconsciously, although they may still end up employing these discursive structures if they perceive that they may help to further their cause in a particular context or interaction.

We have diverged from the issue of what the foreign visitors could have comprehended from the English version of the introductions at the "Big Meeting." In sum, however, we can see that the three North American visitors from NADA must have heard a rather disorganized slew of introductions that, judging from the look on the faces of the three, was mostly overwhelming and confusing. If they

read the signals in Dr. Sharma's mixed gender references and symbolic associations with the Government, then they may have also surmised a rather hierarchical approach to development work within the SVS approach to implementing their rural health projects. Dr. Narayan from NADA New Delhi clearly understood many more of the social and cultural nuances alluded to in these introductions and throughout the conversation. Even she, however, as a "nearly native" Hindi-speaker[7], told me later that very often "you basically just get an impression from these interviews, and sometimes you aren't even sure why you got that impression."

AKTUAAL MEN, KYAA HUUAA? (ACTUALLY, WHAT DID HAPPEN?)

Now that we have represented two incomplete versions of the transcription from the introductions made in Leelapur that morning, we will now examine the transcript of the introductions in its entirety. As is clear from an examination of the complete exchange that follows this section, each person pretty well knows when he or she may speak and when he or she should remain quiet. The goal in presenting this here is to finally compare various understandings of what was happening in the interaction in order to draw some conclusions concerning the general efficacy of the communication and implications for larger themes of this research:

[7] Dr. Narayan's "mother tongue" is Tamil, but she learned Hindi as a young girl, along with Tamil and English. She did tell me later, however, that she is still more comfortable speaking English than Hindi. On the other hand, as we shall learn later, she also lived for a couple of years in a village in Udaipur District not far Leelapur and thus learned some Mewari, as well as rural Hindi.

*Language key:

- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Original Text	English Translation
Pandey (SVS Block Dir.): ***aaii jaao, bhaii, maaine aaii jaao.***	Pandey (SVS Block Dir.): ***Come, bhaii*** (lit. "brother"), ***come inside.***
Dr. Sharma: *Come, come.* (to visitors)	Dr. Sharma: *Come, come.* (to visitors)
SVS local Village Health Worker: ***calo, aaii jaao maaine*** (waving a few *gariib log* men into the verhandah)	SVS local Village Health Worker: ***Let's go, come on inside.*** (waving a few *gariib log* men into the verhandah)
Dr.S: **aap sisTar hain, na?** (to the young woman recently arrived in Leelapur as the Government-appointed Assistant Nurse/Midwife or "ANM")	Dr. S: **You are a nurse, right?** (to the young woman recently arrived in Leelapur as the Government-appointed Assistant Nurse/Midwife or "ANM")
Pandey: **ye sisTar hain, ye sisTar hain,** (pointing to two young women and a young man sitting together with their backs against the wall) **ye sisTar hain-naii posTing huuii hai.**	Pandey: **She is a nurse, he is a nurse,** (pointing to two young women and a young man sitting together with their backs against the wall) **she is a nurse-(her) new posting has (recently) happened.**
Dr. S (a little surprised): **acchaa.** *He is also ANM, from the government.*	Dr. S (a little surprised): **Oh, ok.** *He is also ANM, from the government.*

Dr. Jain (female Dr. from SVS): **thoRe der baahar le jaao** (to *gariib log* woman with a crying baby in her arms)	Dr. Jain (female Dr. from SVS): **Take (him) a little outside.** (to *gariib log* woman with a crying baby in her arms)
Dr. S: *...and five of them, these traditional birth attendants trained by Seva Mandir, are* **…** (aside, to his assistant) **bhaii, daaii maan koun-kounsii hain?** (then to the crowd) **haath uThaa den**	Dr. S: **...***and five of them, these traditional birth attendants trained by Seva Mandir, are* **…** (aside, to his assistant) **bhaii, who all are the midwives?** (then to the crowd) **Raise (your) hands.**
Jafferjii (assistant to Dr. S): **daai maan haath uThaao**	Jafferjii (assistant to Dr. S): **Midwives, raise (your) hands.**
Dr. Jain: **daaii maan**	Dr. Jain: **Midwives.**
Susan Clark (NADA Prog. Dir., taking notes): *Aah haa…*	Susan Clark (NADA Prog. Dir., taking notes): *Aah haa…*
Dr. S (counting raised hands): *One, two, three, four, five. They are in this* **jone***, not in entire block, but in this* **jone***, they are working here.*	Dr. S (counting raised hands): *One, two, three, four, five. They are in this* **jone***, not in entire block, but in this* **jone***, they are working here.*
Dr. Narayan (from NADA, Delhi office): *In this "zone."* (translating for her colleagues)	Dr. Narayan (from NADA, Delhi office): *In this "zone."* (translating for her colleagues)
Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. Harold Drumm: *hmmm…*	Dr. Harold Drumm: *hmmm…*

(*Gariib log* women are talking amongst themselves softly.)	(*Gariib log* women are talking amongst themselves softly.)
Dr. S: *Yes, in this particular <u>part</u> of the block.*	Dr. S: *Yes, in this particular <u>part</u> of the block.*
Clark: *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: - *They are there, five. And these are the health workers, actually, village health workers (pointing and counting the local VHWs) one, two, three. And he is the community health worker. Means, superior to them. He was formerly health worker after, say, a certain period, but now*— (to the community health worker) **kitne saal?** (The man holds up four fingers.) **caar saal ho gyee, tumhen?** (again, to his foreign visitors) *After four years, he is named as community health worker.*	Dr. S: - *They are there, five. And these are the health workers, actually, village health workers (pointing and counting the local VHWs) one, two, three. And he is the community health worker. Means, superior to them. He was formerly health worker after, say, a certain period, but now*—(to the community health worker) **How many years?** (The man holds up four fingers.) **You have four years (here)?** (again, to his foreign visitors) *After four years, he is named as community health worker.*
(Speaking at the same time as Dr. Sharma.)	(Speaking at the same time as Dr. Sharma.)
Dr. Jain (from SVS, to the community health worker): ***aThiine aaii jaao, aaii jaao, maiine aaii jaao, bhaii. aaii jaao maiine baiTho, anh?***	Dr. Jain (from SVS, to the community health worker): ***Come over here, come. Come inside, bhaii. Come inside, sit down, eh?***
Dr. S: *Four years of working, after that, he has been named*	Dr. S: *Four years of working, after that, he has*

as community health worker. Similarly, in these Traditional Birth Attendants, we are thinking of now having **moThaa, moThii daaii maan.** *Means, elder. And a Traditional Birth Attendant, who has, uh, who has get dou.., uh, who were there in the four years, for four years she has worked. His job is to join hands with them, the junior one, and tries to bring him up to his own level.*	*been named as community health worker. Similarly, in these Traditional Birth Attendants, we are thinking of now having* **moThaa** (male gender agreement)**, moThii** (female gender agreement) **daaii maan (midwife).** *Means, elder. And a Traditional Birth Attendant, who has, uh, who has get dou.., uh, who were there in the four years, for four years she has worked. His job is to join hands with them, the junior one, and tries to bring him up to his own level.*
Clark (smiling): *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm. <u>mmm</u>-hmmm...*	Clark (smiling): *mmm-hmmm, <u>mmm</u>-hmmm. mmm-hmmm...*
Dr. S: *He had been a good worker, so he tries to bring his compa...this adjoining area to his level, and just helping.* [(aside to himself) **unhh, uske paas**] *So that is there. And, uh, you know, he is our health educator, he is also helping.* **idhar aao, bhaii,** *Baxii-jii, Kishanlal-jii.* (pointing to Baxii-jii,) *He is health educator here. Block health educator. Baxii-jii, and another, Kishanlal-jii. Both, two of them. There are about,* **kitne hain***? sixty-six? sixty village health workers working in this entire block. And* **TraDishanal barTh**	Dr. S: *He had been a good worker, so he tries to bring his compa...this adjoining area to his level, and just helping.* [(aside to himself) **unhh, with him**] *So that is there. And, uh, you know, he is our health educator, he is also helping.* **Come here, bhaii,** *Baxii-jii, Kishanlal-jii.* (pointing to Baxii-jii,) *He is health educator here. Block health educator. Baxii-jii, and another, Kishanlal-jii. Both, two of them. There are about,* **How many***? sixty-six? sixty village health workers working in this entire block. And* **how many**

aTenDanTs ye kitne hain, TraDishanal? Ritu?	**Traditional Birth Attendants, Traditional? Ritu?**
(No one else is speaking, but a baby cries.)	(No one else is speaking, but a baby cries.)
Ritu (Ladies Health Worker Trainer from SVS Udaipur Headquarters): **is jon men to paanc hain,** *allover* **biis hain.**	Ritu (Ladies Health Worker Trainer from SVS Udaipur Headquarters): **In this zone there are five,** *allover* **there are twenty.**
Dr. S: *Twenty.*	Dr. S: *Twenty.*
Ritu: *Twenty.*	Ritu: *Twenty.*
Dr. S: *Twenty in the block, but in this* ***jone*** *fives…*	Dr. S: *Twenty in the block, but in this* ***jone*** *fives…*
Baxiijii: *Five…*	Baxiijii: *Five…*
Clark (as she rapidly jots down notes): *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*	Clark (as she rapidly jots down notes): *mmm-hmmm, mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: *And* **jonal** *worker, where is* **jonal** *worker?*	Dr. S: *And* **Zonal** *worker, where is* **Zonal** *worker?*
Ritu: **jonal warkar, tooo...**	Ritu: **The Zonal Worker, well…**
Jafferjii (assistant to Dr. S): **woh Neemghar men.**	Jafferjii (assistant to Dr. S): **He is in Neemghar.**
Dr. S: *oh, in another village. He is there, we will be meeting him there.* **lekin**, *but the coordinator, Block Coordinator is here. He is here. Panelaal Singh-jii?* (two	Dr. S: *oh, in another village. He is there, we will be meeting him there.* **but**, *but the coordinator, Block Coordinator is here. He is here. Panelaal Singh-jii?*

gariib women say "PanelaalSingh-jii," then three people suddenly cough) *And above them, of course, Pandey-jii is there* (Pandey-jii smiles a slight laugh).	(two *gariib* women say "PanelaalSingh-jii," then three people suddenly cough) *And above them, of course, Pandey-jii is there* (Pandey-jii smiles a slight laugh).
Dr. Drumm: *Yes*.	Dr. Drumm: *Yes*.
Dr. S: *So this is them, and few of them, they are the ladies here, the local ladies. This is the village known by the name "Leelapur."*	Dr. S: *So this is them, and few of them, they are the ladies here, the local ladies. This is the village known by the name "Leelapur."*
(Several women, including Ritu, Dr. Jain, a few *gariib* women, and many men all say together, "Leelapur, Leelapur.")	(Several women, including Ritu, Dr. Jain, a few *gariib* women, and many men all say together, "Leelapur, Leelapur.")
Clark: *Unh-hunh.*	Clark: *Unh-hunh.*
Dr. S: *Leelapur.*	Dr. S: *Leelapur.*
Dr. Whitcomb (writing in her notebook): *"Leela…"*	Dr. Whitcomb (writing in her notebook): *"Leela…"*
Dr. S: *And this is the building, aah, constructed, uh, by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan plus these village peoples themselves. By their contribution, we have constructed.* (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **kyon? yeh kamyuniTii cenTar hai, na?**	Dr. S: *And this is the building, aah, constructed, uh, by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan plus these village peoples themselves. By their contribution, we have constructed.* (to Jaffer-jii, his assistant) **Right? This is the community center, isn't it?**
Jaffer-jii (a little tentatively): **jii.**	Jaffer-jii (a little tentatively): **Yes.**

Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: *This is their community center. And this, you have seen that platform there?*	Dr. S: *This is their community center. And this, you have seen that platform there?*
Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: *That big- There their meetings, they are held. That is, that is also constructed with the help of the people by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. When they found that the people are very much eager, and they want to cooperate. So, this, <u>their</u> demand, <u>their</u> need was that they should have a common place where they can sit and talk about their upliftment of their <u>village</u> upliftment.*	Dr. S: *That big- There their meetings, they are held. That is, that is also constructed with the help of the people by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. When they found that the people are very much eager, and they want to cooperate. So, this, <u>their</u> demand, <u>their</u> need was that they should have a common place where they can sit and talk about their upliftment of their <u>village</u> upliftment.*
Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: *And there they perform some meetings and certain type of, say,"**bhajans**", what you call, <u>prayers</u> and other things. <u>Joint</u> pray- prayers.*	Dr. S: *And there they perform some meetings and certain type of, say,"**bhajans**", what you call, <u>prayers</u> and other things. <u>Joint</u> pray- prayers.*
Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*	Clark: *mmm-hmmm.*
Dr. S: *So this is the picture of the village. And these are the, of course, the…*(to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **vilaj helth kamiTi membarz *hain*, yahaan?**	Dr. S: *So this is the picture of the village. And these are the, of course, the…*(to Baxii-jii, the Health Educator) **Are there any Village Health Committee members here?**

Baxii-jii (to Singh-jii, a local leader of Leelapur): **kaun hai, Singh-jii?**	Baxii-jii (to Singh-jii, a local leader of Leelapur): **Who is here, Singh-jii?**
Singh-jii: **jii saahab. woh, pahale to Mohan-jii Tailor bhii *haa*, baakii to...**	Singh-jii: **Yes, sir. He, before Farooq-jii Ahmed *was* also there, and the rest, well…**
Baxii-jii: ***naii, paN,* kaun-kaun hain, in men se?**	Baxii-jii: ***No, but,* who all is here, among these?**
Another *gariib log* man: **aaye naii...**	Another *gariib log* man: **They did not come…**
Singh-jii: ***kare, MoThiilal aayo, kare?***	Singh-jii: ***Why, did MoThiilal come?***
Dr. Sharma: (impatiently) **khaR rahaa hai. ho khaRke, dekh lo, baahar.** *And he is the, un, umm,* (very slowly now) *traditional, unh, healer.*	Dr. Sharma: (impatiently) **He is around. Get up and take a look, outside.** *And he is the, un, umm,* (very slowly now) *traditional, unh, healer.*
(All three North Americans, especially Dr. Whitcomb, the anthropologist, look up at the man standing outside the verandah with interest.)	(All three North Americans, especially Dr. Whitcomb, the anthropologist, look up at the man standing outside the verandah with interest.)
Dr. Jain: *home remedy…*	Dr. Jain: *home remedy…*
Dr. Whitcomb: (with interest) *Oooh.... Oh, I see...*	Dr. Whitcomb: (with interest) *Oooh.... Oh, I see...*
Dr. Sharma: - *Traditional healer. Uh, he is maintained by us actual,* [Dr. W: *unh-hunh*.] *he has joined hands. He is illiterate.* [Clark: *unh-hunh*.]	Dr. Sharma: - *Traditional healer. Uh, he is maintained by us actual,* [Dr. W: *unh-hunh*.] *he has joined hands. He is illiterate.* [Clark: *unh-hunh*.]

But he knows about the traditional medicine. [Dr. W: *ooh...*] [Clark: *unh-hunh*.] *So we want to revive, uh, this, what you call this native medicine*.	*But he knows about the traditional medicine.* [Dr. W: *ooh...*] [Clark: *unh-hunh*.] *So we want to revive, uh, this, what you call this native medicine*.
Dr. W. and Clark (at same time): *mm-hmm*.	Dr. W. and Clark (at same time): *mm-hmm*.
Dr. Sharma: *So he is there.*	Dr. Sharma: *So he is there.*
Dr. W: *And he uses herbal medicines?*	Dr. W: *And he uses herbal medicines?*
Dr. S: *Pardon? Herbal medicines. Of course. He is using most of the herbal medicines. He is very liked by the people.* [Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.] *But illiterate, of course.* [Clark and Dr. W simultaneoulsy: *mm-hmm.]* *But, still he is doing it: health education, he is doing it. And jointly we work.* (then pointing to the three nurses he already introduced) *The ANMs, the government ANMs.*	Dr. S: *Pardon? Herbal medicines. Of course. He is using most of the herbal medicines. He is very liked by the people.* [Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.] *But illiterate, of course.* [Clark and Dr. W simultaneoulsy: *mm-hmm.]* *But, still he is doing it: health education, he is doing it. And jointly we work.* (then pointing to the three nurses he already introduced) *The ANMs, the government ANMs.*
[C./Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.]	[C./Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.]
Dr. S: *You know, I told you that we have very good rapport with them.*	Dr. S: *You know, I told you that we have very good rapport with them.*
(In back, someone says to ANMs: **haath milaao!**)	(In back, someone says to ANMs: **Bring your hands together to greet them!**)

Clark: *Yes, you did tell me. And it is very good to see everyone joined here to be with us.*	Clark: *Yes, you did tell me. And it is very good to see everyone joined here to be with us.*
Dr. Drumm: *Yes.*	Dr. Drumm: *Yes.*
Dr. Sharma*: Yes, yes. <u>Jointly</u> we work. She has joined recently.* (to a government ANM he had met previously) **woh, kab? aaj aayii? yuun?**	Dr. Sharma*: Yes, yes. <u>Jointly</u> we work. She has joined recently.* (to a government ANM he had met previously) **Her, when? Today she came? Is that it?**
ANM 1: **haan**	ANM 1: **Yes.**

By reading the transcription in its entirety, we can arrive at a relatively privileged perspective on the introductions of this development interaction. As I mentioned earlier, only eight people present at the interaction could comprehend most of what was being said in the interaction as it moved constantly between Hindi, Mewari, and English. These people were Dr. Sharma, Dr. Jain, Ritu, Jaffer-jii, Pandey-jii, Dr. Joshi (silent throughout the conversation at this point) Dr. Narayan from NADA, and myself.

One issue emerging from an examination of the text is that Dr. Sharma regularly switches between two distinct sets of metaphorical language to introduce individuals and activities to the North American investigators. One set of images refers to *vertical metaphors* for describing relationships between SVS workers, *gariib log*, and one another. The other set of images refers to purposefully *horizontal metaphors* for describing those same basic relationships. Both of these sets of metaphorical references are only available to interpretation

by the English-speakers and the few people who understand a bit of English along with speaking Hindi. Some of the vertical metaphors mentioned here have already been mentioned in the section that describes how Dr. Sharma introduced several people by also placing them within the SVS hierarchy:

1. *And he is the community health worker. Means, superior to them.*

2. *… we are thinking of now having* **moThaa, daaii maan.** *Means, elder. … His job is to join hands with them, the junior one, and tries to bring him up to his own level. … He had been a good worker, so he tries to bring his compa...this adjoining area to his level, and just helping.*

3. *And he is the, un, umm,* (very slowly now) *traditional, unh, healer. … Traditional healer. Uh, he is maintained by us actual, he has joined hands. He is illiterate. But he knows about the traditional medicine.*

In each of these comments, Dr. Sharma employed vertical metaphors or qualified his horizontal description with a hierarchical reference. The vertical metaphor is especially clear in the second comment where he says twice that *his job* is *to bring him…bring this adjoining area to his level.*

Even as he used these vertical metaphors in reference to the SVS employees, however, Dr. Sharma was also careful to include horizontal metaphors such as "*to join hands with them,…just helping."* Dr. Sharma perhaps wished to impress his guests with his understanding of the latest "dev-speak" by incorporating the current and popular development discourse of participatory development, but his word choice also reveals how he was apparently still caught between the top-down ideology under which he worked for most of his career and

current ideologies of "empowering the people." The horizontal metaphors of participatory development are most apparent throughout his description of the village meeting platform and the mistakenly identified Community Center:

> *And this is the building, aah, constructed, uh, by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan plus these village peoples themselves. By their contribution, we have constructed. … There their meetings, they are held. That is, that is also constructed with the help of the people by Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. When they found that the people are very much eager, and they want to cooperate. So, this, their demand, their need was that they should have a common place where they can sit and talk about their upliftment of their village upliftment. … And there they perform some meetings and certain type of, say, "**bhajans**", what you call, prayers and other things. Joint pray- prayers.*

Dr. Sharma described here how the platform and Community Center were built with *their contribution*, by *their demand* because *they found that the people are very much eager, and they want to cooperate.* But he then went on to state that the purpose of building these public spaces was for the villagers to have a place to discuss *their upliftment, of their village upliftment.* The vertical metaphor of upliftment is clearly out of place within the larger context of cooperation and participation, suggesting that stronger and better-equipped people should try to bring the downtrodden up to their own level.

In fact, this inconsistency within Dr. Sharma's discourse is also reflective of a larger inconsistency within the shifting discourses of international development, in which the once common term *upliftment* has slowly been replaced by terms such as *awareness building* and *empowerment*. Vertical metaphors of development were born from top-down approaches to "development as modernization" that gained currency in the late 1960s and continued through

the 1970s. As these top-down approaches, usually implemented at that time by governmental rather than non-governmental programs, continued to yield less than satisfactory results "on the ground," development theorists such as Chambers sought new approaches to imagining development practices that could hold greater potential for affecting positive change for the poorest of the world's poor. For development practitioners who worked under the earlier approaches, making the ideological shift was probably challenging and incomplete. Dr. Sharma himself worked for many years under the Government of Rajasthan's top-down approach to *uplift* the impoverished villagers from their ignorance and deprivation. His attitude toward what he considered interesting but uninformed attitudes and approaches to health and hygiene practiced by *gariib log* in the region was clearly expressed when he introduced Singh-jii, Leelapur's "traditional healer:"

> Dr. Sharma: *And he is the, un, umm,* (very slowly now) *traditional, unh, healer. … Traditional healer. Uh, he is maintained by us actual, he has joined hands. He is illiterate. But he knows about the traditional medicine. But he knows about the traditional medicine.*
> [Dr. W: *ooh...*]
> [Clark: *unh-hunh*.]
> *So we want to revive, uh, this, what you call this native medicine*.
>
> Dr. W. and Clark (at same time): *mm-hmm*.
>
> Dr. Sharma: *So he is there.*
>
> Dr. W: *And he uses herbal medicines?*
>
> Dr. Sharma: *Pardon? Herbal medicines. Of course. He is using most of the herbal medicines. He is very liked by the people.*
> [Dr. W: *mm-hmm*.]

But illiterate, of course.
[Clark and Dr. W simultaneoulsy: *mm-hmm.]*
But, still he is doing it: health education, he is doing it. And jointly we work. (then pointing to the three nurses he already introduced) *The ANMs, the government ANMs.*

Dr. Sharma was apparently aware that his foreign guests were likely to be interested in the "traditional" or "native medicine" practiced by men such as Singh-jii in Leelapur. This interest on the part of foreigners in rural Rajasthan can stem both from viewing it as "exotic" and from its possible representation of another current ideological development concept: that of "indigenous knowledge." Moving forward in his discussion of the traditional healer, Dr. Sharma seemed to be walking a thin line between the horizontal ideologies of "participation" while recognizing the importance "indigenous knowledge" and the vertical ideologies of "upliftment" and "showing them the light" through SVS's health education programs. At the same time he introduced Singh-jii, Dr. Sharma was also quick to point out that "*he is maintained by us (SVS) actual, he has joined hands"*. Dr. Sharma may not have wanted his guests to conclude that there would be aspects of village health in Leelapur not ultimately under SVS or Government control. He emphasized that "*we want to revive what you call this native medicine*," suggesting that he and SVS can control how native medicine plays a role in their larger health plans for the community. The notion that SVS had to step in to "revive … this native medicine" might have led the NADA representatives to believe that in this village until recently the role of the traditional healer had somehow diminished as modern medicine was introduced to them. According to my discussions with Singh-jii and others, however,

traditional medicine has always been and continues to be the preferred method for treating illness and medical conditions whenever possible.

Dr. Sharma suddenly tried to head off any further discussion of the traditional healer and his role in the village when he said finally, "*So, he is there".* This type of statement, "so, that is there" or "so, he is there" is a very common North Indian linguistic strategy for closing, often abruptly, a topic of conversation that one does not wish pursue any further. Apparently, Dr. Whitcombe, the North American anthropologist, did not seem to recognize this Indian English linguistic mechanism for changing the subject, seeing how she pursued the topic further with the question, "*And he uses herbal medicines?"* Dr. Sharma seemed surprised by her question because he apparently thought that he made himself clear that the topic was closed, which may have been why he replied, "*Pardon?"* But Sharma was now in the uncomfortable position of having to say more about the healer, and in his explanation he ended up contradicting his earlier attempts to downplay the importance of Singh-jii to the village:

> *Herbal medicines. Of course. He is using most of the herbal medicines. He is very liked by the people.*
> *But illiterate, of course.*
> [Clark and Dr. W simultaneoulsy: *mm-hmm.]*
> *But, still he is doing it: health education, he is doing it. And jointly we work.* (then pointing to the three nurses he already introduced) *The ANMs, the government ANMs.*

In spite of just mentioning that SVS is trying to "revive the native medicine," Dr. Sharma also allowed that "*He is very liked by the people."* In fact, most *gariib log* visited Singh-jii before they went to the ANM or SVS health workers that do not practice traditional medicine. Knowing that SVS had not been successful so

far in supplanting the importance of the traditional healer in the village, he was quick to also remind his foreign guests that Singh-jii is "illiterate, of course." Then, perhaps realizing that his emphasis might give them the impression that he had a condescending attitude toward the man and his practice, he added, "*And jointly we work."* Perhaps because he perceived Singh-jii's roles of traditional healer and SVS employee as contradictory, Dr. Sharma seemed ill at ease when discussing exactly what he actually does in the village. Perhaps wishing to avoid a prolonged discussion of issues concerning traditional versus modern medicine in the village, he bluntly changed the subject to one with which he would feel more comfortable: "*The ANMs, the government ANMs."*

The preceding discussion of Dr. Sharma's contradictory use of horizontal with vertical metaphors when describing SVS activities and "partners in development" in Leelapur points to a common ideological split that exists even within the minds of many development practitioners, especially in those who have worked in the field for more than a decade. Having been trained in vertical, top-down models of development for many years, some older development professionals find greater difficulty in internalizing the language and concepts of horizontal models for development. Yet, for those working in NGOs, they may also realize that in order to maintain adequate funding for their on-going projects, they must learn the new language at least well enough to use key buzz words, such as "participation," "cooperation," "joining hands," "indigenous knowledge," "empowerment," etc. At least in concept or theory, nearly all "Northern" development donor agencies today subscribe to these horizontal models for

development. If they believe that an NGO they have been working with is working with outdated ideas of top-down development, they may also withdraw financial support from projects they are funding at that organization. Even as Dr. Sharma may have appeared to be controlling and manipulating the direction of the "Big Meeting," one should also bear in mind that his own and the fortunes of SVS were riding to a great extent on the outcome of this very brief interaction. In other cases, I witnessed some senior SVS management in Udaipur also coaching employees to pay attention to the language they use to describe their work and the people with whom they work in rural communities. Whether he was instructed by SVS headquarters to watch his language or not, Dr. Sharma clearly developed a sensitivity to his own expressions and the implications for maintaining good relations with members of the donor community whom he would host. For a seasoned and honestly committed development professional who was apparently aware that his evaluators might come to view his approaches to rural development as out-of-date, to balance his life-long held world views with a veneer of the latest lingo would perhaps seem wise.

"DO THEY KNOW WHY WE ARE HERE?"

Finally, this chapter closes with the first significant question uttered by Dr. Narayan, the most linguistically and culturally proficient representative sent by NADA to the "Big Meeting":

*Code-switching key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Original Text	English Translation
Dr. Sharma: *So, this is the thing... oh, pardon* (as Dr. Narayan begins to ask a question)	Dr. Sharma: *So, this is the thing... oh, pardon* (as Dr. Narayan begins to ask a question)
Dr. Narayan: *Dr. Sharma, do they know why <u>we</u> are here?*	Dr. Narayan: *Dr. Sharma, do they know why <u>we</u> are here?*
Dr. Sharma to Singh-jii (looking confused and a little nervous): **Aahh, mmm, bhaii, kyaa aap ko maalum ye kyon aaye hain yahaan par? kuch bataayaa gayaa, kyaa?**	Dr. Sharma to Singh-jii (looking confused and a little nervous): **Aahh, mmm, Bhaii, do you all know why they have come here? Was something said?**
Singh-jii: **nahii…**	Singh-jii: **No…**
Dr. Sharma**: nahiin bataayaa gayaa**, *actually they have not been told, they have just been asked to… Should I tell them?*	Dr. Sharma**: Have not been told**, *actually they have not been told, they have just been asked to… Should I tell them?*
Dr. Narayan: *You should.*	Dr. Narayan: *You should.*

In spite of the fact that she could have also spoken directly to any of the villagers in Hindi, Dr. Narayan respectfully addressed her question to Dr. Sharma rather than circumvent his authority. At this point, however, the tension at the meeting intensified even further, as Dr. Sharma had to admit that the *gariib log* had no idea why the foreigners had come to Leelapur. In the next chapter we look into reasons why *gariib log* would agree to attend a meeting like this without any notion of its purpose.

The general lack of attention paid to the *gariib log* throughout the introductions was truly impressive, and the impression created was not at all the one that Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan had hoped to build up to this point. What happened next at the "Big Meeting" is described in Chapter Three, where we further examine perspectives held by *gariib log* on this and other similar development interactions.

CHAPTER 3: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE *GAON*[1]

This chapter examines shifting perspectives on development held by Bhil villagers, or "*gariib log*," living in the Leelapur-BaNaawaT area of Jhilaasanaa Block in Udaipur District. Beliefs held by some *gariib log* about the meaning, nature and effectiveness of "vikaas" in their lives are changing with their increased exposure to and experience of development as practiced both by the Rajasthan government and the NGOs working in their area. In particular, this chapter explores how modern notions of *vikaas* articulate with the long-standing power dynamics and daily realities of the lives of these *gariib log*. The first part of the chapter discusses some of the contextual issues and evolving ideas held by *gariib log* concerning *vikaas* in their lives. Returning to the "Big Meeting," the second part of the chapter examines how *gariib log* tend to communicate and advance their agenda in development projects that are promoted and implemented by NGOs in the region.

Robert Chambers' seminal work Rural Development: Putting the First Last (1983) has come to be seen by many within the Indian NGO sector as the new Bible for promoting "participation" and "bottom-up" approaches to rural development planning and management. Although the book and its author have attracted increasing criticism more recently, for many development professionals

[1] *Gaon* is the common Hindi term for "village." With some variation in pronunciation, it is also the Mewari language term for "village." *Graam* is another Hindi term derived from Sanskrit that also means "village," though this term is used more frequently by governmental and non-govermental organizations to refer to the socio-political life of the village. People rarely refer to their own village with the term "graam" unless it is within such an institutional context.

and NGO field staff the ideas he puts forth in this book remain unquestioned both in terms of the goals and the means for implementing projects to attain those goals. While the goals themselves are apparently unassailable in their broadest interpretation, the realities of how these goals and terms are understood or interpreted by those who were once considered "Last" remain complicated and often seemingly unrelated to academic readings of the concepts. While the language of development has shifted from "interventions" to "partnerships," actual participation and involvement of village people in development design and implementation is a long and difficult proposition. Until today, the shift from "Last" to "First" has often occurred little more than in name only.

"VIKAAS KAA MATLAB KYAA HAI?" ("WHAT DOES DEVELOPMENT MEAN?")

Sulawaas - BaNaawaT: Adi-Vasi Village within a Caste Hierarchy

Sulawaas is the central caste-based village around which are located about one dozen smaller Adi-Vasi (predominantly Bhil) villages, including Leelapur where the "Big Meeting" was held. Brahmin and Rajput landowners own almost all of the fertile farmland of Sulawaas located in small valleys near the river. Sharecroppers and landless laborers from nearby Bhil communities are the primary tillers of the land, but the majority of the profits are returned to these Hindu landlords. Most of the village's inhabitants, especially those of the Rajput and Brahmin clans, tend to live close together in cement-constructed (*pakkaa*) homes clustered together along the alleys and streets of the town. Sulawaas' poorer inhabitants, usually of the Bhil community, tend to live in mud-constructed (*kacchaa*) homes toward the outskirts of the village. Sulawaas is also the local

seat of power, with a state-built panchayat meeting hall, a large NGO-sponsored community center, one primary and one secondary school, and one well-stocked state-run medical dispensary and health clinic. All of these public and semi-public (NGO) institutions are organized carefully among the homes and small businesses including small goods stores, smiths and tailors that cater to the needs of caste-Hindus and Bhils alike.

One kilometer north of Sulawaas is BaNaawaT, a village of approximately two hundred Bhil households scattered across rocky, dusty hills. Unlike Sulawaas where there is a clear locus to the commercial and public activities of the village life, when visitors ascend the rutted dirt road into BaNaawat there appears to be no "town center." There are no shops or offices to be seen on the parched hillside, with the exception a single mud home with shiny strips of small one-rupee shampoo and beetel nut packets hanging from a board near the door. This is BaNaawaT's only goods store, selling small amounts of oil, grain, kerosene, matches, etc. to local residents as and when they need them. Three huts further down the road beyond the goods store, a tailor works in the shade of his home with no outward signs of the business he conducts inside.

Standing at the edge of the village, three *pakkaa* ("finished" or "cooked") buildings stand in stark contrast to the many scattered *kacchaa* ("unfinished" or "raw") mud huts that dot the hills in the village. Two of these three cement and brick constructions painted over with whitewash are the only markers of government presence in BaNaawaT. The first is a small, two-room building located about 20 meters above the goods store, in which a single Assistant Nurse

Midwife (ANM) staffs a tiny, under-stocked, state-run rural health clinic that dispenses basic medicines and allopathic treatments for the villagers of BaNaawaT. The second sign of government investment in the village is a one-room primary school perched rather conspicuously on a hill nearby. Despite having been constructed nearly twenty years earlier, hardly any children of the village attend classes at the school due to the fact that the teacher, appointed to BaNaawaT from Udaipur, does not live in the village and only rarely visits the school for a few days each month. In case any officials should come looking for him, he prefers to leave a note on his teacher's desk, stating that he is away at Udaipur for meetings and will return within a couple of days. In this way, he and thousands of teachers across India's rural landscape manage to collect their monthly salaries of around 2500 rupees per month (about US$ 60 at the time of this research) without having to actually relocate to the remote villages to where they are posted. Of course, the education of BaNaawaT's children suffers considerably, as the schoolroom remains empty throughout much of the year.

The third *pakkaa* building in the village, located between the goods store and the health-clinic, marks the presence of the local NGO, Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. SVS sponsored the construction of the *sammuhdaayak bhavan* ("community center") with funds collected from the villagers along with some direct investment from the NGO. This simple building also represents the pride of some villagers with their participation in their own *vikaas* ("development"), as they contributed not only some of the funds but also their own labor to construct the center, as Dr. Sharma incorrectly stated of the building where the "Big

Meeting" was held in Leelapur. This two-room building in BaNaawaT has a large verandah where villagers hold SVS and other informal meetings about *graam vikaas* ("village development"), and where they socialize, especially when entertaining visitors such as myself. In fact, I spent many weeks sleeping on the verandah of the *senTar* ("center") in cold weather and on its roof during the hot season.

Bhils and other tribal groups of Southern Rajasthan traditionally prefer to live apart from one another, with their mud and stone homes located next to their fields rather than clustered together in centralized villages as in Sulawaas.[2] Although I occasionally visited Sulawaas to attend meetings or to meet various local leaders and NGO workers for interviews, I always ate and slept in BaNaawaT at the Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan community center. SVS managers directed me toward BaNaawaT in my initial research stage because it is practically a model village of SVS activity from nearly every Development angle, including agricultural, educational, resource management and health-related development projects. I later learned that for this same reason the BaNaawaT-Sulawaas-Leelapur area is among the villages most visited by a wide range of observers and evaluators to SVS activities, including foreign visitors and representatives of funding "partners," such as NADA.

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[2] In fact, this fundamental reality of Bhil and Garasiya (another tribal community) was grossly overlooked when a large-scale Government of Rajasthan development "scheme" (*Indra Awaas Yojnaa)* for building homes in impoverished communities placed all of the homes close together in clusters near the presumed "town center." This monumental failure of government development planning is seen across Udaipur District in the ruins of homes and buildings built twenty years under this scheme, destroyed by local people seeking fittings and materials to improve their traditional homes back near the fields located in the hamlets (*phalas*) scattered across the hills. The "ghost towns" one sees throughout the District stand as constant reminders of recent "failures in Development."

Nanalaal: Newly-Elected Bhil Sarpanch of BaNaawaT

BaNaawaT is home to Nanalaal-jii, the recently elected Bhil sarpanch[3] for the *gram panchayat* ("village council") seated at Leelapur. A former SVS paraworker for the NGO's initial education programs in BaNaawaT, Nanalaal was elected to the post in the wake of changes to the Rajasthan state constitution under Amendment 73, requiring representation of tribal people in panchayats where tribal populations are significant. I had been meeting and speaking with people in the village of BaNaawaT for more than one year previous to that warm February afternoon, but Nanalaal had never previously shown any interest in meeting me. This may have been a prudent decision on his part, since his role as the first Adi-Vasi sarpanch of the area placed him in a potentially precarious political and social position within the village vis-à-vis the traditional Brahmin and Rajput leadership of the region.

When we sat down, Nanalaal reminded me almost immediately of how he had seen me at the previous year's gram sabha[4], the momentous first village council under the newly restructured panchayat system over which he presided. He recalled the audiocassette recordings I made at that meeting, and he thanked me for the Hindi transcripts I provided to him and the panchayat two months later.

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[3] *Sarpanch* is an official title that refers to the elected leader of any *gram panchayat* who is charged with leading the elected local representatives of the surrounding villages in presenting public works proposals to the Government of Rajasthan administrative officers (who are appointed, not elected).

[4] *Gram Sabha* is the public meeting that should be held bi-annually at which all residents of the panchayat may present their needs and suggestions to the panchayat committee for debate and decisions as to which proposals should be sent on the to office of the local Sub-District Officer.

He told me that these transcripts, more than two hundred hand-written pages in all, had become a valuable tool for reminding members of the previous panchayat, the traditional Brahmin and Rajput leaders of Sulawaas, about exactly what had been stated and agreed to by the villagers and their newly-elected representatives in that crucial first meeting. Referring to verbal commitments made by the traditional Brahmin and Rajput ruling elite of Sulawaas panchayat to uphold decisions taken at the public meeting, Nanalaal said, "They say that they don't remember what was said, or they try to make us believe that nothing was said at all, but now we have the report to prove what they said and what the villagers said. We have shown them these papers with their words, and now they have to do what they said they will do." Having provided him with this tool for enforcing the will of local villagers in the region in the face of traditional power structures seems to have been a major factor influencing Nanalaal's decision to finally speak with me.

I understood that his initial apprehension at meeting with might have been due to the fact that the traditional local leadership in Sulawaas closely scrutinized his actions as the first Bhil sarpanch. He may have been concerned to be perceived as too closely allied with an outsider like myself at a critical time in his village's history, especially during the first year when he was trying to establish both his independence and his ability to manage affairs in the complicated village political arena.

In our conversation that afternoon, Nanalaal articulated a remarkable range of perspectives and experiences that I recognized from dozens of similar,

though usually disjointed, conversations with other members of his Bhil community. In that discussion, I apperceived several perspectives on the meaning of *vikaas* or "development" both from Nanalaal's personal experience and from the collective experience of his village. He articulated a remarkable range of views and experiences that resonated with dozens of similar, though usually disjointed, conversations with other members of his Bhil community.

Before examining some specific issues of personal and community identity associated with *vikaas* that arose from my conversation with Nanalaal, we first turn to a theoretical exploration of the meaning of development for villagers in North India. The next section discusses Akhil Gupta's seminal interpretation and application of postcolonial theory in a rural North Indian agricultural community before examining its utility and limitations for describing self-expressions of development in a remote Rajasthani tribal setting.

IDENTITIES, POSTCOLONIALITY AND A POST-"AWAKENING" CONDITION

"Postcolonial Condition"

Issues of identity are central to understanding the perspectives of *gariib log* toward "development" and development interactions. Highlighting the centrality of identity, Gupta describes the complex self-conceptions held by poor farmers and laborers in the village of "Alipur." Traditional notions of community, land, caste, and family articulate with modern notions of development that lead these villagers to see themselves in the global economic world as "underdeveloped." Gupta writes that

> underdevelopment is not merely a structural location in the global community of nations; rather, underdevelopment is also a form of identity, something that informs people's sense of self…. In rural northern India, a pervasive feeling of being underdeveloped, of being behind the West, articulated with other identities of caste, class, region, gender, and sexuality, produces people's sense of their selves. I have termed this complex articulation of "backwardness" the *postcolonial condition*; thus, development is never a singular or monolithic "apparatus" that imposes itself on the rural poor." (Preface, p. ix)

Gupta uses the term "postcolonial condition" to describe this situation because in the years immediately following Independence a large number of villages across North India, such as Alipur, were targeted by the Central Government's First (1951) and Second (1956) Five-Year Plans for agricultural development. These plans outlined the general economic strategies the nation would follow for bringing agricultural and industrial development to its burgeoning population. Two decades of postcolonial agricultural development efforts followed, based primarily on attempts to affect structural social change through redistribution and land reforms. Nearly all the Central Government's direct economic assistance, however, was reserved for the nation's large-scale industrial sectors, such as steel production. Hence, "it was estimated that food grain requirements would double in the decade covered by the Second and Third Plans; however the proposed investment was only enough to ensure a 15 percent increase in total output" (Gupta: 49). In a move to redress this discrepancy, the Five-Year Plans of the late 1960s and early 1970s led to a "Green Revolution" in which relatively fertile regions of the country such as Punjab were targeted for

investment in the form of U.S.-engineered high-yielding varieties of wheat seeds and modern chemical fertilizers. Most of these inputs went to the wealthiest farmers, since they could produce the most dramatic results on their large tracts of fertile land. Whereas the national production of wheat exploded as a result of these investments, for the majority of poor peasant farmers and landless laborers who did not receive the seeds and fertilizers their socio-economic status worsened (Frankel 1971). This disparity between the wealthy and poor farmers of North India created a situation in which Indira Gandhi's particular brand of populism[5] held broad appeal for mass groups of agriculturalists. In her appeals, "'development' and, by extension, poverty were the central terms of reference" (Gupta: 66). Gupta concludes that, as poor farmers in North India increasingly defined their lives and situations in terms of poverty and "development," they came to view themselves as "underdeveloped" in relation to global economic forces. This identification of one's self and community as "underdeveloped" is the defining characteristic of what Gupta describes as the "postcolonial condition" following years of post-Independence rural development efforts by the Government.

Complex identities of one's self and community as "underdeveloped" also figure prominently in Nanalaal's Bhil village. I would argue that one key difference between the caste villagers in Alipur and the Adi-Vasi *gariib log* of

[5] Indira Gandhi's famous populist campaign is commonly summarized by her 1971 election

BaNaawaT in configuring this identity of "underdevelopment" is the *defining moment* that marks this self-conception. For the Bhil residents of Leelapur-BaNaawaT, and perhaps for other remote non-caste communities across North India, I propose that the articulation of these development ideologies with traditional beliefs might be better described as a *post-awakening condition*.

Bhil Identity, Independence and Development

In Gupta's description, the identification by many disadvantaged communities throughout northern India of one's self and community as "underdeveloped" is temporally defined by the break from colonial rule at Independence, which, in turn, led to their current "postcolonial condition." For the most part, however, the postcolonial Central Government Five-Year Plans and their resulting identities of "underdevelopment" have remained substantially distant from the day-to-day lives and consciousnesses of the vast majority of Adi-Vasi people living in the hills of Southern Rajasthan.

While the terms "pre- and post-colonial" may be important descriptors for a handful of educated Bhil leaders, national development discourses of poverty associated with those terms do not often hold as much relevance for the majority of Bhils living in villages like BaNaawaT and Leelapur. For members of this traditionally remote community, the events that have contributed to their current

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campaign slogan "*Gariibii Hatao!*" or "Remove Poverty!"

self-identification as "underdeveloped" were more likely to have occurred nearer to their own homes and fields.

Prior to their first experiences with NGO or Government-sponsored development projects and processes over the past twenty years, most Bhil people would have been unlikely to think of themselves as "underdeveloped." During the colonial period, they were typically referred to by mainstream Indian and British societies as one of the groups included among the "Scheduled Tribes and Other Backward Classes (OBCs)." Being "tribal" and "backward" are still aspects of the identities of many Bhils today. *Gariib log* of BaNaawaT who interact with outsiders in marketplaces or in labor projects outside their village (e.g. road construction and dam-building) are also more likely than those who do not venture out to understand that many "outsiders" might view them as "backward." In Hindi, the term *piichay kaa log* literally translates as "people from behind." More often, urban Indians simply refer to them as *Adi-Vasi*, but notions of *piichay* or "behind" are implicit in the term, anyway. Whereas *piichay* may have figured in the identity of many Bhils from the time of Independence till now, defining one's self in terms of *vikaas* is a much more recent phenomenon in these communities.

Among the most disadvantaged classes and castes of northern India, the main significance of Independence perhaps lies in the "reservations" accorded to them under the Indian Constitution drafted in 1948. Specific rights and privileges

of "reservations" in socio-political spheres, such as state and central government jobs and positions in public institutions of higher education, are accorded to those communities identified in the Constitution of India as "Scheduled Tribes and Castes."[6] A growing awareness of their rights and "reservations" under the Constitution has also encouraged those Bhils with at least some education to pursue greater social and economic opportunities for themselves and their community. Doshi writes that under the post-Independence systems of governance,

> the tribals are aware of the constitutional safeguards and privileges granted to them. They know about reservation in services, economic and educational facilities and benefits. However, their awareness is more pronounced about the pragmatic concerns than the theoretical clauses of these safeguards. Awareness of these aspects of life is visible irrespective of their differences in regard to age, religion and landholding, etc. (Doshi:218)

Although most people in BaNaawaT have not been able to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the "reservations," many people I spoke with there were aware of their existence. This is especially true since the 1994 amendments to the Constitution of the State of Rajasthan secured reservations for Adi-Vasi representation on *panchayat* councils in those districts and local communities

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[6] In explicating the term "tribal," Sharma writes, "the difficult complication is that the term tribal, in the context of India, cannot be defined as a racial or ethnic category. The prevalent and accepted definition of the term is essentially legal – juridical. Certain groups and communities are listed in the government schedule – periodically revised, the last revision in 1976 – as tribes. Hence the prevalent usage 'scheduled tribes'." (Sharma 86) In addition to the scheduled tribes and castes, another group identified for special rights and whose membership is most open to interpretation and redefinition is that group mentioned in the Constitution as the "Other Backward Classes."

(*tehsils*) where tribal populations are greater in number, such as Udaipur District and BaNaawaT-Leelapur-Sulawaas *tehsil*. Nanalaal became his *tehsil*'s first Bhil *sarpanch* because of the reservations stipulated in the Constitution of the State of Rajasthan.

Once they have seen new systems for rural education, healthcare, and agricultural technologies for improved crops introduced by NGOs and Government agencies, some *gariib log* also tend to increasingly view themselves against a modern, developed (or developing) world outside their community. These initial development encounters may awaken a new *desire* to become more "developed", simultaneously fuelling a growing self-awareness of ones' self and community as "underdeveloped." The moment of "awakening" this desire for more *vikaas*, then, marks a very significant shift in the mind of a Bhil farmer who has never traveled even as far as Udaipur City, just three or four hours away by bus. Rather than coming to see one's self as "underdeveloped" because of encounters with national development discourses and projects in a postcolonial era, Bhil farmers come to see themselves as "underdeveloped" due to localized encounters with GO- and NGO-sponsored activities that have been occurring in their communities for just the past twenty or so years. One might suggest that this is just further evidence that Bhils and other remote Adi-Vasi communities are simply "behind" but are still a part of the same postcolonial processes and ideologies affecting the rest of North India. I would argue, however, that because

they remained relatively unaffected by both colonialism and Independence, their self-conceptions regarding *vikaas* and lack of *vikaas* should also be understood as something other than *postcolonial*.

In Udaipur District alone, several NGOs have names with the Hindi words *chetna* ("awareness") and jaagrin ("awakening") figuring prominently in their titles (e.g., Chetna Samiti, Jaagrin Sansthaan). "Awakening" a desire for more and better forms of *vikaas* over the past two or three decades, these NGOs have also contributed to what I call here a *post-"awakening" consciousness*.

BaNaawaT in the Time of Nanalaal's Father

Nanalaal described the situation of his village as being quite different twenty-five years before compared with the situation one could see that spring day in 1996.

> At that time, they say that the population was less, there was land, they could do something (from that land), and from the jungle also, *matlab*[7], (they could gather) grass (for the livestock), and *gond* (from the trees)[8]. On the other hand, here (in the village) the crop fields were not good, so some would go into the jungle and farm there, in some places, they would go dig up the ground and farm there, too, along with the grass and the gum they brought from there. In this way, *matlab* this was how it was. …

[7] *Matlab* is a very common word that people interject between ideas that they want to string together in a sentence, much as one in American English might use "ok," or even "you know." The closest translation, however, is "meaning…" as in "I mean."

[8] *Gond* is a sweet, gum-like sap that derives from a tree found in the jungles of Southern Rajasthan. The *gond* is still collected by Bhil people for sale in nearby markets from where it is sent around and out of the region. The crystalline substance is chewed as delicacy by some people.

He explained how the low population density allowed the resources of the region to remain plentiful, and people were able to live from the land's bounty, supplementing a hunter-gatherer existence with migratory, shifting cultivation patterns, often deep within the forests above the village. In fact, many people did not reside much of the time in the village, as nearly all of their activities were centered on the forest, including the agricultural production later carried out in the hamlets near their homes. The somewhat nostalgic picture emerging from this description of traditional Bhil life in the time of Nanalaal's father is one of autonomy and self-determination, in which respect and worship of the mountains, trees, rocks, and rivers, provided them with spiritual as well as economic and social connections with their natural environment. They were generally removed from political and social forces outside their immediate world; and the monsoon rains that filled local rivers with impassably high water up to four months each year heightened their isolation.

Nanalaal mentioned in passing that the people of his father's generation preferred to farm in the forest because "here (in the village) the crop fields were not good," which would have been due in great measure to increasing population pressures and subsequent loss of nutrients in the soil from excessive planting. But he did not mention that rich landowners also occupied the best fields outside the forest. While the social and physical isolation of Bhils is less today than it was fifty and more years ago, perhaps one of the most significant shifts that has

occurred since that period is their relation to local elites and their centers of power.

For at least one and a half centuries, Rajput and Brahmin landowners in the area have resided mostly in Sulawaas; and their abundant fields, hundreds of acres with just one family, are located on the banks of the river that runs full three or four months in an average year. Their crops have always been healthier and more abundant than those in neighboring BaNaawaT. The Rajputs and Brahmins were never dependent on the forests like their Bhil neighbors, nor did they attempt to farm the rocky hills of BaNaawaT. Local power relations in BaNaawaT-Leelapur centered on this distribution of land and wealth along caste (valley) / Bhil (forest) divisions. By remaining fairly removed from caste-Hindu social and economic structures prior to Government controls on the forests in the mid-1960s, Bhil villagers otherwise withstood centuries of inequities in resources and wealth.

With Government-sponsored deforestation rampant for more than thirty years, the forest no longer can provide the sustenance it once held for the Bhils of the village. This is the primary affect of *postcolonial* "development" policies on Bhils. They have been left with little choice but to attempt cultivation of the rocky fields near their homes. As they struggled to obtain their livelihood from the barren hills below the forest line, they were also forced to interact more frequently with caste-Hindus from the larger community. Because they often could not derive sufficient sustenance or income from their own small plots,

increasing numbers of Bhils from BaNaawaT turned to local Rajput and Brahmin landowners in search of wage labor opportunities. In a few extreme cases, some Bhils also entered into bonded labor agreements with wealthier landowners. With the increase in economic and social interactions, tensions between the Bhil and caste-Hindu communities have also grown.

POSTCOLONIAL OR POST-"AWAKENING" CONSCIOUSNESS?

If the colonial encounter is not so immediately central in the histories and lives of most Bhil communities, including the *gariib log* of Leelapur/BaNaawaT, then how does *vikaas* become a centrally defining moment before and after which one can clearly note a fundamental change in the thinking of the community? In these terms, we are not speaking of "development" in the traditional, bureaucratic sense of modernization projects and their attending discourses. Rather, the awakening of a belief in the power of "development" signifies the moment when a fundamental and new ***desire*** is born within an individual or community for progress, change -- *vikaas.* Nanalaal described this shift in thinking toward *vikaas* in the following way:

> Yes, before it was there, but now it is a lot more, *matlab*, now in each person's mind and heart there is some desire that if something can happen, then we should make it happen. In other words, your children can eat *daal-roTii*. [9]. Like that we are thinking, "what should we do about whatever we *can* do?" Like that, we are thinking now. Before that was not there so much, this thinking about these problems.

[9] *Daal-roTii* refers specifically to the staple foods of the region: lentils and wheat flat bread. The term also refers to food and sustenance, more generally. To this day, many *gariib* families of the area have difficulty in obtaining enough *daal* and *roTii* to keep each person well nourished.

In Hindi, the idea Nanalaal expresses here is most closely described by the words *chetnaa*, the self-"awareness" necessary to bring about internal forces for social and economic change in any community, or *jaagrin*, the "awakening" of oppressed people against the forces that have kept them oppressed and underdeveloped within the larger, traditional Rajput society. The critical experience for obtaining *chetnaa* or *jaagrin* is to encounter *vikaas*, especially as introduced by NGOs through development schemes and projects that specifically aim to increase awareness, such as adult education programs to increase opportunities outside the village or Village Collection Committees to prevent dependence on moneylenders.

As described by Nanalaal, the development encounter leads to a *desire* in which a defining moment of *chetnaa* is awakened within an individual or community. For him, this *awakening* began with his initial access to formal education introduced by SVS:

> N: Now, like I was telling you, since 1982 we have joined with Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan, then before, too, in our village a few people like myself were literate but people older than me could not read. But we began to teach those people, too, how to read and write. From every means possible, *matlab*, from every way possible, there was a literacy *scheme*[10] from which we told them about the importance of learning. *Matlab*, this is about knowledge.
>
> K: Was your father literate?

[10] *Scheme* is an English word that is commonly used in Hindi to describe Government programs for rural development, such as literacy *schemes* (e.g., Lok Jhumbish) or housing *schemes* (e.g., Indra Awaas).

N: No. No, he used his thumbprint to sign…

Nanalaal went on to comment on the reasons why the Rajput and Brahmin families wanted to block the education of Bhils in their community:

> If they cannot read, then they will be able to go and work at those people's homes. If he can read, would a servant stay there? They thought, "he won't stay." That's what was in their hearts and their minds, that "we will not teach these people," so that we can stay working as servants for them.

According to Nanalaal's description, the turning point in this power and educational imbalance, or one may say the beginning of BaNaawaT's initial development encounter, occurred in 1982 when SVS introduced a literacy "scheme" to the *gariib log* of BaNaawaT. Education was the first in a series of development projects launched by SVS in the area that eventually led to an increase in understanding and desire for self-improvement among members of the local Bhil community.

As Nanalaal said, the cumulative effect of this awakening to the possibilities for development in their village was that "now in each person's mind and heart there is some *desire* that if something can happen, then we should make it happen. In other words, your children can eat *daal-roTii*. Like that we are thinking, 'what should we do about whatever we *can* do?'" This desire, brought about by new awareness of their current and traditional state of underdevelopment, grew from initial development encounters to a generalized

belief and conviction that they must now improve the day-to-day lives of their community members, particularly the children.

I believe that the moment when this *desire* was awakened in Nanalaal is the defining moment when *vikaas* began to take hold in his psyche as a fundamental goal in itself and a means for structuring his life. At the same time, in communities where poverty, injustice, and inequality are endemic, the awakening of a belief that *vikaas* is possible also leads to a new understanding of one's own "underdevelopment," or lack of *vikaas*. Rather than a "postcolonial condition" tied to a specifically colonial legacy, I have suggested here that it may be useful to describe this experience of becoming aware of one's "underdevelopment" in remote Adi-Vasi communities as a *post-awakening condition*.

In order for the contemporary global development paradigm and ideology of "participatory rural development" to ultimately succeed, a post-awakening consciousness must be present or at least dawning within the people and communities affected. Without this consciousness, and the attending post-awakening realization of one's condition as "underdeveloped," participation by a community in its own development will tend to remain limited to rhetorical or pre-programmed participatory activities designed to fulfill the project designer's requirement for community participation.

On the other hand, with a post-awakening consciousness comes a potential loss, as well. While the *desire* for *vikaas* may bring about positive changes in an individual or community, the same desire may also create restlessness within people that cannot be easily addressed by the schemes and programs promoted by NGO or government agencies. At this level, if the *desire* for education, health, and opportunities that Nanalaal spoke of evolves to become a perceived *need* for consumer goods, for example, the post-awakening condition may, in a sense, increase dis-ease and create discomfort. The challenge for BaNaawaT-Leelapur will remain to inculcate a desire for growth and stability without forsaking traditional Bhil values of mutual support, self-reliance, and even satisfaction or contentment with one's lot in life, in spite of remarkable obstacles to ease of living.

Perspectives on Development in BaNaawaT

A translation of the term *vikaas* from a Hindi-English dictionary is "evolution; development, growth; bloom" (Chaturvedi 1988: 700). Significantly, the first definition named in the dictionary is not "development" but "evolution." The concept of "evolution" among Adi-Vasis in Southern Rajasthan is not similar to Darwinian notions of evolution. Based on my conversations with farmers in the region, I came to understand that their ideas of evolution tend to be more cyclical than linear, tied more to agricultural seasons than to ideas of long-term morphological or intellectual development. For those people who now use the

term, *vikaas* is a relatively recent addition to the daily language of most rural people, especially for those who speak only Mewari. People first encountered the term in BaNaawaT and other villages of the region about fifteen years ago as older NGOs extended their field areas into new villages and new NGOs moved into regions previously unaffected by NGO programs. According to several sources, at that time few people understood *vikaas* as "evolution." Rather, the term typically had limited, activity-related connotations for these rural farmers. For instance, one man in another village told me that for people of his village "ten years ago,[11] the meaning of *vikaas* was 'bunding' (a specific project implemented by an NGO to build retaining walls around fields in order to prevent excessive run-off and loss of top-soil). Now we know that it also means *chetnaa* ("awareness"), and many types of work are *vikaas*." Many NGO's would ideally like to engage the *gariib log* of their target area in an evolution of understanding concerning even the term itself. This evolution is a process that unfolds differently for various groups and individuals throughout the region. When I asked a woman of about fifty years from BaNaawaT what she thought *vikaas* meant, she simply replied that she did not know. She told me that she did not know the word at all. When I asked her how she would describe the introduction

[11] In this particular village, "development" and NGO involvement was a much more recent phenomenon than in the village of BaNaawaT. It is perhaps interesting that understandings of "development" and its concomitant terminology and activities remain localized even after their introduction within a specific region. Understanding of these ideas and terms tend to come only after specific projects have been implemented.

of new farming techniques, the new school, or the rural health clinic, she replied, "Some changes have come." *Badlav*, or "change," is the term that I heard most commonly used by *gariib log* to refer to the types of activities and beliefs that could be seen as related, directly or indirectly, to development work implemented both by NGOs and the Rajasthan state government. The sensibility that such changes are not neutral but are, rather, progressions or *developments* toward a better way of life is not always clear in the way that many people refer to the work. When pressed further, however, these people less initiated in local "dev-speak" often said that the changes do reflect *sudhaar*, which translates literally as "reform; uplift, repair; modification; improvement" (ibid. 821).

Where it is known at all, the range of understandings of "development" exemplified above by the terms "bunding," "*badlav*," or "*chetnaa*" can be seen as "indigenous" notions of how *vikaas* is or should be a part of village life, insofar as they represent experiences that they associate with the type of work undertaken by NGOs in their village. Nanalaal's descriptions of the changes in BaNaawaT since his father's youth are complicated by his many experiences with local versions of international development. Yet, his words and thoughts also reflect "indigenous" notions of the term and what he believes it should ideally mean for the people of BaNaawaT.

Nanalaal's experience of Development began almost thirty years ago with his father's uncommon insistence that he must avail himself of the opportunity for

education at the newly established government school in BaNaawaT. He was one of only twelve Adi-Vasi boys to attend the local school in its first years during the mid-seventies, and he was able to complete his education to the tenth standard before returning to BaNaawaT as a young man. His relatively high educational standing within the village, combined with his uncommon interest in promoting education within his community, soon led to a paid, part-time position working as an education outreach paraworker for Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan during the early nineteen-eighties. While he continued to farm his small plot of land, his involvement in public service and SVS-sponsored development plans for BaNaawaT eventually culminated in his becoming the first Bhil person from his community to be elected to the locally powerful position of *sarpanch*.[12]

In describing his first impressions and understanding of the SVS commitment and approach to working with *gariib log*, Nanalaal emphasized the attitude of joint cooperation he witnessed in the first education workshop he attended in 1981 as the primary reason he initially chose to work with the organization:

> We were there for eight days, in Jhiilaasanaa, and they gave us *training* about education. In this it seemed to us, having gone to SVS, that at that time, in the beginning, those people who came to give the *training*, in SVS, we saw this feeling in them that, like we are making food, and all of

[12] Under the new (Rajasthan State Government Panchayat Act of 1994?), reservations for Adivasis (Scheduled Tribes) and women in the positions of *ward panch* member and *sarpanch* were made mandatory across the state. Traditionally, the local ruling elite of any panchayat held these positions, especially the position of *sarpanch*, almost exclusively. In BaNaawat, a family of Brahmin *zamindars* (landowners) held these positions for at least two generations, controlling most of the official politics in the area for several decades.

> them were joined with us in making the food, too. Even those *BaDe aadamii* (big men)[13] from SVS who came, they also joined in. And when the water ran out, I went to get the water, taking a bucket, and along with me the *BaDe aadamii*, (names two former SVS directors), they also took a bucket and brought (water). And when we had to sweep the floors, we swept the floors, and they also swept the floors. So, that's one… *matlab*, there wasn't any difference. And the next year, we went for another training and saw that again. Every time, everyone joined together and did the work. It wasn't that 'I'm doing this work' and another guy who is an *officer* is just sitting and watching. It wasn't like that.

Nanalaal was clearly impressed by how the SVS leadership consistently strove to show how "there wasn't any difference" between themselves and the Adi-Vasis participating in the training. One might suggest that their actions were more representative than substantive, but the effect in Nanalaal's mind was clear: working with people like those in positions of power at SVS seemed like a good idea because they were more committed to working *with*, rather than *for*, the people of his community. Given the typical attitude of government workers who express their distance from the *gariib log* by barking commands and demanding to be served at government-organized functions, one can imagine that this new approach to discussing and exploring the experiences of Adi-Vasi villagers would impress them favorably to support the NGO's efforts in their community. For those villagers who participated in such workshops and training exercises, the ideologies and discourses of development may have been more likely to become internalized and personalized as they realized that this was more about identifying

[13] *BaDe aadamii* translates literally as "big man." It is a common way that *gariib log* refer to powerful men and women, as the case may be.

and meeting their needs rather than fulfilling government quotas for implementing State-run schemes.

A Blend of Alternative and Mainstream Views on Development

Having participated in many SVS workshops, meetings, and discussions over more than a decade, managers and workers, Nanalaal is well versed in the development programs for his area and in some international development language and ideologies, as well. Particularly as he described the growth of SVS activities in his village over a period of fifteen years, his perspective on some development issues appeared rather indistinguishable from those of other SVS workers in the area, infusing his descriptions of change in BaNaawaT with the mantras of "participation," "awareness," "group building" and "community." However, as is often the case with other lower- to mid-level SVS workers whose roots can be traced back to the former kingdoms of Mewar, he also expressed some ideas that seemed more "indigenous" to his life in BaNaawaT and less influenced by SVS training sessions and workshops.

Early in our conversation, Nanalaal underscored the importance placed by SVS leadership on the first step toward SVS involvement in village development:

> We came to know that in other villages like in Jhiilaasanaa village, SVS was doing wasteland development work, someplaces land-levelling work was going on, and we said again and again to Singh-Saheb (the Block Manager) that you should do this work for us, too, the work for our farms. But we did not know that for work that SVS does there should be a

> *sammuuh*.[14] We did not even know what a group is. And in other zones they had already started this work. So we kept saying to Singh-Saheb, 'What is this? We want to join in this kind of work, too, and this kind of work should happen here, too.' So then Singh-Saheb said, 'Next year we will definitely do this work. You should start a group. Those people who are coming for education training at your center, you should make a strong group with them. Whatever those people want, you need to tell what work they want done. So, we began meeting, we discussed these things.

They later submitted a proposal to the SVS Block Office to help them alleviate the lack of grass available for their livestock due to the drought that year. When the SVS officers asked them "What kind of help do you want from us?" the group members replied, "We need grass to feed our animals, so provide us with the grass to feed them." The SVS response was to enquire as to what how much money the affected farmers of BaNaawaT could collect to contribute toward a special purchase of grass from outside sources, and the remainder would be provided by SVS in the form of a partial grant and partial loan with no interest. As he says above, "We did not even know what a group is" before approaching SVS for help in their farming needs. With this experience, however, Nanalaal and those villagers who participated in the scheme realized the importance of first meeting to discuss the most pressing issues, followed by a proposal to SVS for assistance involving a significant contribution from the villagers in addressing that need.

Perhaps Nanalaal's most unusual or counter-to-mainstream statement related to his notions of the positive role of population growth in the development

[14] *Sammuuh* is the Hindi term for "group."

in BaNaawaT. I was at first surprised by his initially loose connection between the ideas that "at that time, they say that the population was less" and "people lived too much apart, they were not able to meet one another." So, I questioned Nanalaal further about his alternative interpretation of the need for a certain level of population growth in order for development to occur:

> K: As the population has grown, has there been some benefit then, too?
>
> N: Yes. From this the benefit is there that, like before in our village there were only three or four *phale* (hamlets) in which there were really only two or three families living in each one. But now there are a lot of families here, from which the village has gotten this big. There were fifty households then, and now in our village, in all the area around BaNaawaT, where there were fifty houses before, now it has grown to two hundred houses.
>
> K: Yes, then what is the benefit exactly, if you get some benefit from the growth of the village like this?
>
> N: From this, from the village growing like this, the benefit is that at least some people must be educated. From education, like before there were only fifty families living here, so then what that meant was that, they say, we were from the jungle then, *matlab*, we just did farming in the jungle. From the jungles where we farmed, farming from the jungles only, and farming here in the village, too, they say that we used to bring gum and bidi leaves back from there. They told us that, that from these things we used get our subsistence. And now, there are two hundred families here, two hundred families. And our land is here, right there (motioning to the fields around us), and we do our farming right there on that land. And from that land we get our subsistence now. We don't go into the jungles now, to do farming, that is. And the gum and bidi leaves that we used to find, you can't find that so much any more.
>
> K: So, in your opinion, from the situation before, there has been an improvement in the situation here?
>
> N: (emphatically) Now it is improving.

From this passage, we can see that Nanalaal equated the four-fold growth of his village with increasing opportunities for education and *vikaas* among its residents. As the population increased, people began to meet more often, and then, Nanalaal remarked, "at least some people must be educated." The cornerstones to social and economic development in small Adi-Vasi communities such as BaNaawaT are education and the "awakening" that follows. As a result of increasing awareness and education, a significant improvement (*sudhaar*) occurred in the lives of the Bhils in BaNawaaT with the shift to agricultural activities from earlier subsistence modes of gathering gum (an expensive ingredient of the beetel leaf and nut concoctions that many rural and urban Rajasthanis covet) and *bidi* (inexpensive local cigarettes) leaves from the forest. With this wholesale community movement from gathering to farming, people's lives improved dramatically. Essentially, Nanalaal believed that the people of BaNaawaT could only begin to participate in Development when the population grew large enough for a critical mass to be attained that would allow people to meet together as a community, to begin to educate some of its members, and to centralize their agricultural activities in the village and away from the forests. In contrast to Nanalaal's interpretation of the positive relationship between population growth and development in the village, I never heard during my entire research a single NGO or funding agency professional discussing any benefit from rural population growth. In this sense, Nanalaal's interpretation of how population growth

allowed his community to break the traditional cycles of a simple gatherer existence toward a more complex agricultural society may represent an alternative, or perhaps even "resistant," viewpoint to the mainstream, urban views on the evils of overpopulation.

Nanalaal's alternative interpretation of population growth in his community's development remained balanced by commonly held beliefs in the need to check growth, as well. Our conversation continued without interruption:

> K: And from the population growth, is there any difficulty, any downside?
>
> N: People have thought a lot about the population. They know that if you raise too many children, we won't be able to give them enough *roTii* (bread), we won't be able to give them clothes, we won't be able to give them education. So, like that, whoever has two or three children in our village actually (brief pause to consider), seventy or eighty people have had the operation done. They had a vasectomy done, for those people who have three or so children the vasectomy was done. Now we, now this is the thing that whoever has three children, those people who have more than three children, the people have made a list of them. And they are giving them advice about this. In meetings, too, they are giving advice, that "You have this many children. That's fine. Go see the doctor and keep your family small and together."
>
> K: Do people accept this?
>
> N: They accept it, and they are wanting it. For instance, we meet in Jhiilaasanaa town, and now I meet them in the panchayat meetings, and they are telling us that, and now even by way of the panchayat itself, three or four people have had the operation done. And I am the first to tell them that "there are some *schemes* for this[15], and you should be among the first to go there and join the program to reduce your family size."

[15] The Parivar Yojna Scheme (Family Planning Scheme) allows for payment of several hundred rupees (equivalent to about US$15) to men who obtain vasectomies.

> K: If people don't accept this, some people will accept this and maybe some people won't accept this. If some people don't accept this, then what might be the reason?
>
> N: For this we are thinking that five toes cannot be all alike, so whoever accepts this first we will take first. The next year, someone else will get the opportunity to think about it more, then a little more still with time, and in the third year he will think even more, until finally he will definitely join with us. But whoever joins first, we will take first. We give him time to learn about it. We don't force him at all, but after he learns about it he will definitely join with us.

The belief that "if you raise too many children, we won't be able to give them enough *roTii*, we won't be able to give them clothes, we won't be able to give them education" has almost certainly been informed by a post-awakening consciousness that has taken hold since the first SVS education, group-building and economic development activities were introduced in BaNaawaT more than a decade earlier. We can also see that this is a relatively new understanding of population growth in the fact that uninitiated members of their community first need to be convinced by Nanalaal and other SVS paraworkers of the importance of having no more than two or three children.

These two competing views on the role of population growth following one after the other in Nanalaal's descriptions of development in BaNaawaT without any apparent conflict suggests a recontextualization of some long-standing development ideologies and discourses in his mind due to the specific experiences of his village. This may indicate to the outside observer some of the complexities and intricacies of local perspectives on development by some of the

residents of BaNaawaT directly involved in development activities who themselves critically view the changes taking place around them. This may also indicate the growth of a post-awakening condition in the village, in which some members see themselves and their community as "underdeveloped" on the one hand, while also reinterpreting some of the mainstream understandings of development in the context of their remote society with its traditionally low levels of social interaction beyond religious rituals at forest temples and annual festivals.[16] On the one hand, compared with most *gariib log* from Leelapur-BaNaawaT, Nanalaal has an unusual command of the dominant language and ideologies of development. On the other hand, some of his comments reflect perspectives on development that do not seem to follow dominant international paradigms.

There is not a single, unified idea or perspective on development held by *gariib log* in any of the areas where I conducted this research. Just as Nanalaal expressed a range of different, and sometimes conflicting, understandings of development in his village, most people in BaNaawaT and in other villages I visited similarly understand *vikaas* within a personally defined range of perspectives. Most people certainly do not have the wide range of experience in

[16] Asked when and why people ever used to meet before the introduction of the SVS village group discussions, Nanalaal replied, "We always met in the jungle at the temple, but not for discussion on the problems of the village." Worship of local gods, which include many believed to live in the land, rocks and trees all around them, often takes place through the mediation of a local *bopa*, or priest, who becomes possessed by the god. Once the priest is possessed, villagers request

development that Nanalaal has gained over the past twenty-five years, but each person tends to have his or her own experientially informed understanding of the term *vikaas* and its related activities.

Above all, Nanalaal expressed a strong belief in the necessity for *shikshaa* (education) and *gyaan* (knowledge) to spread throughout his community in order for them to acquire new capacities to embrace and then demand development activities that could lead to improvements in the marginal aspects of their difficult lives. When I asked him how long it takes on average for a person to obtain "true knowledge" sufficient to bring about an awareness of the importance for local *vikaas*, Nanalaal paused to consider for a moment. Then, he said, "To obtain true knowledge, they say, how can the storehouse of true knowledge ever become filled?" His eyes growing wider, he continued, "This storehouse can never be filled. A man should learn something until his very last breath."

Village Perspectives on Foreign Visitors

One particularly warm Febrary afternoon, Mahesh, my assistant, and I observed a Participatory Rural Appraisal meeting of BaNaawaT residents led by a young Udaipur-based development professional from the SVS Forestry Unit. After the meeting, we sat with Heeralal, a young Bhil man from the village who oversaw the construction of a small check dam project just above the village. Heeralal was often present at SVS meetings in BaNaawaT, having been gradually

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blessings, favors, and rulings on disputes or disagreements from the god. Typically, these

inducted into the local paraworker network of SVS employees working at the village level. Although he had only completed his formal schooling up to the fifth standard, Heeralal impressed me as a remarkably bright and articulate participant in his village's development activities. After the SVS Forestry worker left the meeting to return to Udaipur, Heeralal, Mahesh and I discussed a range of issues including his perspective on the visits of foreigners to BaNaawaT:

> *Ken*: In your opinion, do you think that they (foreign visitors) really understand the situation here?
>
> *Heeralal*: About this situation, well… They stay for one to one and half hours with us, but it is up to us to give them the information that our situation is in this kind of condition. This is our view. So, having seen something here, they go, and then we ask ourselves in reality… It is like this.
>
> One time it happened, from over there somewhere, maybe it was North America, a lady came. She was looking at the condition inside our homes. One by one, she went to look at the condition in the homes here, *matlab*, 'how many members live in this household?' So we said, 'There are four members living here.' At that time it was winter, so she was asking, 'What do you have to keep warm and covered?' So, she saw one or two beds. One bed, how can six people get by with just one bed? Then, for the entire village, she got two hundred blankets, one for each household.
>
> And then she also said 'I am going set up a goods store in your village for cooking utensils.' In other words, we could get luxury goods from this store, for which at that time the moneylender was taking double payment from us. In this store we could give the money to our own people, our own brothers. 'A luxury goods store, that is what I am going to set up in your village.'
>
> But she gave the blankets, and she never came back.
>
> *Mahesh*: When was this?

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meetings occur once in every fortnight or as deemed necessary by the community.

> *Heeralal*: mmm…, eighty-six, eighty-seven this happened. Eighty-six, eighty-seven this happened.
> (Here Heeralal suddenly switches from Hindi to Mewari speech.) At that time, if you gave only me a blanket, then I should hang it up in the wind (outside). If you give each (household) (just one) blanket, then we think that it is for thickening up the manure or cowdung (by shaking it on the blanket). 'Thicken it up, thicken it up' so that the cowdung will get harder, and (we think) 'she gave the blanket, so take it.' Like this my people here in BaNaawaT prepared their manure and cowdung, and everyone got a blanket.

This tale has many ingredients that would make it a local legend. It may in fact have already achieved legendary proportions given the flair with which Heeralal tells the story, although I never heard it repeated by anyone else during my stays in BaNaawaT. In any case, this story paints a vivid picture of Heeralal's perspective on the nature of foreigners who come to "do good" in his community. While the woman expressed her good intentions, she made promises she did not ultimately keep, never returning to help establish the locally owned "luxury goods" store for selling stainless steel cooking utensils. By hoping to provide blankets and utensils to members of a traditional society that has lived for centuries without the benefit of stainless steel or woolen bedding, the Western visitor belied her middle-class priorities that have little utility in the lives of the *gariib log*. Just as the man in the first chapter did not perceive a water problem during the monsoon season, this woman did not ask the right questions to learn the needs of the community. Instead, she presumed to know what is best for them. But her distress at not having blankets to keep themselves warm in the

chilly conditions she witnessed was not shared by the villagers. Not surprisingly, the result she hoped to achieve was never realized. Instead, one blanket per household being wholly insufficient to provide bedding for each member of the community, the villagers resolved that the blanket distribution should be put to best effect. By providing each household with a labor-saving device in the cow-dung drying process, she may have assisted them more than she ever knew, although not in the way she had anticipated. Heeralal's animated rendering of this story underscores his implied meaning – that the involvement of foreigners in village development can be misguided, insufficient and, hence, ludicrous. On the other hand, his story also emphasized the resourcefulness of the villagers, as they found ways to put to best use whatever resources they had.

Why* Gariib Log *Go to 'Big Meetings'

Why did the villagers, many from villages as far as three kilometers from Leelapur, travel on foot to be present at the "Big Meeting" with SVS representatives and five people from abroad (including myself)? When the foreigners arrived in their white jeeps, more than twenty men and fourteen women, many with small children, were already seated in the crowded shade provided by the verandah of the mud hut that hot May morning. For more than fifteen minutes, the SVS workers and their foreign guests essentially ignored the fact that villagers could not have understood hardly anything that was being discussed because they spoke amongst themselves almost exclusively in English.

As described in the last chapter, the only type of interaction that took place from the perspective of the villagers during those initial tone-setting moments was a barrage of questions from the SVS head doctors about who among the villagers were important for their success at the meeting. No attempt was made to introduce the foreign guests to the villagers. The villagers' confusion up to this point was evidenced by how the villagers remained silently seated in those cramped conditions until Dr. Narayan from Delhi mentioned the name of the village "Leelapur" among an otherwise long string of English sentences. Spontaneously and enthusiastically almost all the men and women repeated, "Leelapur, Leelapur," as though it was the first thing in the meeting that really made any sense to them so far. Why would anyone choose to travel to a meeting in which his or her role was not to host some strange but interesting outsiders, but instead ended up to be submission to an unlikely series of abrupt questions, with little attention paid to their comprehension of the proceedings?

Twenty minutes after the arrival of the outsiders and immediately following the introduction to the foreign guests of the villagers central to the meeting, Dr. Narayan, the evaluator from NADA, apparently took Dr. Sharma by surprise when she addressed the question of the villagers' participation in the meeting directly:

*Language key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**

- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Dr. Narayan: *Dr. Sharma, do they know why <u>we</u> are here?*

Dr. Sharma to his assistant Jaffer-jii (looking confused and a little nervous): **Aahh, mmm, Bhaii, do you all know why they have come here? Was something said?**

Jaffer-jii: **No…**

Dr. Sharma: **Have not been told**, *actually they have not been told, they have just been asked to… Should I tell them?*

Dr. Narayan: *You should.*

With this, Dr. Narayan clearly upset the controlled direction of the interaction mediated by Dr. Sharma. In Hindi, Dr. Sharma asked Jaffer-jii, who had arrived in Leelapur early that morning to call the villagers to the meeting, if the villagers knew why they were there, and the halting pace of his speech belied his apprehension to hear Jaffer-jii's response. When he replied, "*actually they have not been told, they have just been asked to…*" Jaffer-jii interrupted his comment to correct his apparent mistake, "*Should I tell them?*" One may wonder how he initially intended to complete his first sentence, and perhaps he changed his mind about what he was about to say. If he was about to reveal, "They have just been asked to come here," a questionable thought may have arisen in the minds of the foreigners sent to monitor the relationships and effectiveness of the SVS work with the villagers. The evaluators of this village-based health program might have concluded that the apparent show of SVS support by the villagers' presence

was actually more a demonstration of coercive SVS tactics for gathering "supporters" for a meeting that has no direct relevance to their lives.

Already caught in an awkward moment, Dr. Sharma immediately tried to rectify the mistake by explaining to the villagers who the "outsiders" were and why they had come.

*Language key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Dr. Sharma: **Have not been told**, *actually they have not been told, they have just been asked to… Should I tell them?*

Dr. Narayan: *You should.*

Dr. Sharma (to the crowd): **Bhayaa!** (*"Brother!"*)

Dr. Joshi (another former senior Government doctor who recently joined the SVS Health Unit): **Listen, Bhai!**

(Babies are chatting on their mothers' laps, a general hush comes over the crowd.)

Dr. Sharma: **Uh, look, before us, our guests who have come from outside** (*far away*), **eh?! They have come from America, these people! A very big country, eh?! From there they have come, from there we are receiving money, for our work whichever work is going on, right?!**

Dr. Joshi: **They have come from SVS.**

Dr. Sharma: **The SVS work that is going on, some of the SVS work that is going on. In this some money -- you people** (*the villagers)* **are also giving – some money is coming from that very far-off country. So, these people have come today to meet you all. To see your**

situation, what work is going on, and what all needs you have. They are very happy seeing all of this, what you have built here, you built all of this right? (Pointing to the building they are sitting, apparently still believing that this is a community center, rather than a home.)

One villager from the crowd: **Yes!**

Dr. Sharma: **You didn't make it?**

A second villager, very faintly: **Yes.**

A third villager: **I didn't make it…**

Dr. Sharma: **You also made it. So, they made it** (pointing to the crowd)**, and they** (the guests) **are very happy to see all of this. So, one time, for you, one time…**

(The two American women are conversing on the side in low voices.)

Dr. Joshi: **Welcome…** (and he begins to clap his hands)

Dr. Sharma: **We welcome them…**

(A few villagers applaud briefly.)

Remarkably, Dr. Sharma did not really introduce the visitors to the villagers. Instead, he explained rather generally, "They have come from America, these people! A very big country, eh?!" These comments do not reduce the distance between the villagers and the visitors in any way. In fact, the "introduction" really served to emphasize that these people are, in local village parlance, ***baDe log*** *("big people').* They came from a very big country, and they are giving money to the villagers for the work going on there. There was no mention of the specific project they were reviewing, which could have been misleading to the

villagers because these foreigners are only providing funds for a small part of the SVS activities in the area. Clearly, Dr. Sharma intended to create a sense of appreciation among the group of villagers, explaining why it was important that they came from their homes and were about to sit through an hour of something about which they had really no idea. Another remarkable point about this uncomfortable monologue by Dr. Sharma was that he did not ask the villagers a single question. It was not clear if Dr. Sharma was uncomfortable asking the crowd if they had any questions, but we can see that he may have been, after hearing that "*actually they have not been told (why they were there)…*" In a project where the word "Participatory" figured in the title, the foreigners (including Dr. Narayan from Delhi) were not likely to view favorably a project implementation process and review that involved instructing village people to show up for a meeting without giving any reasons why they should attend.

On the other hand, Dr. Sharma took the opportunity of the foreigners' introduction to congratulate the villagers on their good work and participation in building what he mistakenly understood to be their community center. One or two villagers said that they were involved in the construction, but one person then spoke up in a clear voice to say "**I didn't make it…"** The crowd was actually sitting in the home of one of the people present at the meeting, the first man who said that he built the building.

Before I left with the visitors to their next destination that afternoon, I asked some of the villagers why they came. One man told me, "Jaffer-jii (Sharma's assistant) asked us to come." Another woman, who accompanied a man I had met from BaNaawaT, said, "We were told to come." That is the only response I got from those I asked.

As Heeralal-jii, the man who told the story of the North American woman who gave blankets to their village, said in the previous section:

> About this situation, well… They stay for one to one and half hours with us, but it is up to us to give them the information that our situation is in this kind of condition. This is our view. So, having seen something here, they go, and then we ask ourselves in reality… It is like this.

Clearly, the *gariib-log* of Leelapur-BaNaawaT did not generally expect much to happen directly from these interactions with foreigners in their village. The visitors typically stay for such a short time, an hour or two, that little can actually be communicated during that period. Heeralal explained that it was up to the villagers themselves to try to tell something about the reality of their situation, why they needed assistance, and the type of assistance they required. They could not rely upon the visitors or the NGO workers accompanying them to make it a fruitful meeting from the perspective of the villagers. Heeralal and I discussed the circumstances leading to the case of the unwanted blankets:

> *Ken:* So, this woman who came from North America, how long did she spend in your village?

Heeralal: She stayed, uh, three or four hours she stayed. She saw five-ten houses, and then she spoke with some other people, with (an SVS manager) there with her. And she told me then, "I am going to send you something or another." Like that she said. To cover the people.

Ken: She was going to send it herself, from her own side, she wanted to send it herself, or she wanted to send it in accordance with her work?

Heeralal: According to her work. Or maybe she had the money herself. Or maybe she was going to bring it from somewhere then send them to us, but sending it here was her own responsibility.

Ken: But she didn't send them.

Heeralal: No, she sent them. The blankets did come to our village. But the money she was going to send to set up the store for the "luxury items" never came. She never put up that store.

This experience was an apparently formative experience in the development of Heeralal's understanding of interactions with foreigners. My research assistant, Mahesh then asked an important question:

Mahesh: Ok, tell me one thing. Until now of all the foreigners who have come, since '92 or '93, did any of them ever give you their address? So that, *bhai*, after we have gone we can keep some contact? Did anyone give you that? Or did anyone here ever ask for that?

Heeralal: We never asked for that. We have been thinking, "Ok, you have come all the way here from America. So you must have done some hard work already." So we have this belief that if you came one time, then you will come again. After one month, after two months, three months, she (the North American) will come back again. This is what we believed. But today, we have begun to ask, now we ask. "Where are you from, what work do you do?"

Ken: Before you never used to ask anything?

Heeralal: Before we didn't ask.

Ken: Why?

(Mahesh laughs.)

Heeralal: From this we have some experience now. That if we say something, then they will understand something. Because how are we going to speak with them again if they don't come back? So, now from this experience, we have learned that we have to ask them these questions. "Give us your address." So that we can ask in a letter, "What happened?" Was their speech true? We can ask that now.

Because of experiences like the one he described with the North American, he learned that he must be more proactive in helping "outsiders" to understand the kind of assistance actually required by the villagers.

Heeralal was not present at the meeting in Leelapur with the NADA people that afternoon with Dr. Sharma, but many of the villagers present had experienced this type of interaction before, too. As we saw in the previous passage with Dr. Sharma and the villagers, the villagers were not provided any opportunity to express their concerns, perspectives or questions. In fact, to this point, it was also significant that two of the foreigners there, Ms. Clark and Dr. Whitcomb (the NADA anthropologist), spoke amongst themselves while Dr. Sharma was making their introductions. Even if they did not understand what Dr. Sharma was saying in Hindi, they could have been more respectful of Dr. Sharma and the villagers by giving their undivided attention to their hosts.

Although the people I asked said that they were attending the meeting because "We were told to come," one could also imagine that they may have held

out some hope that attending this meeting would help them in some way. In my experience, people often came to such inscrutable meetings because they had a belief and *desire* for some particular kind of development in their community. When their voices were subdued or ignored, the village "participants" at the meeting would likely question their decision to come.

Whereas I had witnessed Dr. Sharma develop and maintain excellent rapport with villagers at other village meetings where foreign donors were not present, the pressure of impressing his guests appeared to overwhelm his attention to the *gariib log* that he normally connects with very well. Unfortunately, by observing only this interaction, decision-makers like Dr. Narayan could reach the conclusion that the SVS staff and even the project itself did not "connect with" or benefit the target community. In fact, when I later met Dr. Narayan at her Delhi office for an interview, she told me that "not all organizations conduct such meetings with us the way SVS has done." The idea of "orchestrating" an experience for the foreigners, even when originating from positive intents, may end up "back-firing" in the impressions finally created.

I am not sure what the North Americans felt about the interaction. However, given that one of Dr. Narayan's primary roles at the meeting was to interpret for them, they may well have concluded along the same lines of her understanding. They may still decide to continue funding for the project, but impressions of SVS as a controlling, insecure organization could also be created.

This could work against the NGO in the long term when they are applying for new projects with NADA.

While Chapter Five focuses on the perspectives of donors in development interactions, perhaps I should mention here that the primary concern of many funding agency professionals I interviewed was that their funded projects would end up having little impact, and large sums of money would "go to waste." They all expressed some concern that their resources might be squandered by NGOs that are not open and "transparent" about their processes and true goals. The notion that an NGO could be more concerned with its own "sustainability" was very disturbing to many international development professionals. Development professionals I met working in Governmental (State and Central), bi-lateral (such as NADA or the World Bank), and non-governmental (such as OXFAM or Save the Children) funding agencies recounted similar experiences or fears to me. More than once, I heard both Indian and foreign donors retell what seemed to have become a generalized "myth" within the international development sector, that of the local NGO more concerned with purchasing a fleet of jeeps than with using their funds to bring about real social and economic changes in the lives of its "participants." Most NGO professionals are also aware of this fear within the donor community, and some NGOs responded with apparently defensive actions and behaviors. While "transparency," "accountability," and "credibility" are among the most used (and abused) words in international development

interactions between donor agencies and NGOs, in reality, doubt, fear, obfuscation and confusion frequently obscure the paths to reach these commendable goals.

This chapter's primary concern, however, is to examine perspectives of *gariib log* on these processes. The communication attained in the "Big Meeting" to this point obviously left a lot to be desired, especially from the perspective of the villagers present. The next section presents the primary voice among the villagers heard that day– Shanti-Baaii, an SVS Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA) for Sulawaas, Leelapur, BaNaawaT and nearby villages. She was not the only SVS TBA for Leelapur-BaNaawaT, but she was the only one present at the "Big Meeting."

Shanti-Baaii – Traditional Birth Attendant

While the health and development professionals from North America and Delhi at the meeting focused on trying to obtain a true picture of the effectiveness of the SVS programs in the villages, some villagers also had their own reasons for attending (or avoiding) this relatively high-profile meeting. When villagers come to such events with personal goals for the interaction, they often remain hidden not only from foreigners and "outsiders" but also from the SVS professionals from the headquarters office, such as Dr. Sharma.

In the case of Shanti-Baaii, the primary village-based informant for the "Big Meeting," her personal agenda for attending the meeting included a desire to

enhance her visibility and, perhaps, her legitimacy in the eyes of both the NGO and others in her village as the main health worker representative of SVS for Sulawaas and the surrounding villages. Additionally, she told us months after the meeting that her colleague and competitor in the SVS health unit of Sulaawaas, Kalawaati, chose not to attend the meeting due to a disagreement with Shantii-Bai. The question here concerns how local politics and power struggles tend to affect the dynamics and, potentially, the outcomes for such meetings where a determination by the funding agency on whether to reinvest in the NGO and the community is at stake.

Eight months after the "Big Meeting," my assistant Mahesh and I met Shanti-Baaii at her home in Sulaawaas. Her house is at the end of a small lane off the main road that runs through the village. She directed us to sit on cots in the courtyard in front of her mud home. When we were seated, she immediately took out her health service kit provided by SVS at the Traditional Birth Attendant trainings she had received in Udaipur. She then proceeded to summarize the same technical points in a rather rehearsed manner just as she had done in her demonstration eight months before. We told her that we were not there to learn about the technicalities of her job, however, and instead we began to ask her questions about how she learned that she should be present at the "Big Meeting" months earlier. She set aside her health worker's kit and began to tell us about her experience that day:

Shanti-Baaii: ***I learned about the meeting that day, at the same time. They called me, saying, "people from outside are coming," so I should come.*** (Lowering her voice measurably, speaking in hushed tones now) ***The woman who has been working in SVS here has been fighting with me, so they didn't call me. They did not call me.***

Ken: ***So, Kalawaati got the information about the meeting before, but you did not get the information?***

S-B: ***Yes. Her four brothers live here next to us between our house and the road, and they don't let us even go out to the road.***

Shanti-Baaii's husband: ***We built that wall*** (pointing to a small boundary wall in the path through the lane in front of their house) ***so that we can pass by their house.***

S-B: ***That wall, this is why there is this fight between us.***

Husband: ***For the past one year, this is going on.***

S-B: ***That wall cost 20,000 rupees to build. And now they are fighting this in the court. They filed a case that we need to take it down.***

Mahesh: ***So, that is a lot of trouble for you, having to travel to the court to fight the case…***

Husband: ***This trouble is going on for the past one year, a whole year. We have to go to the court in Jhilaasanaa every Tuesday because of this. Every Tuesday. For one year now, this trouble has been going on. Trouble for them, and trouble for me, too.***

S-B: ***Then she*** (Kalawaati) ***started saying that "this daaii maan does not do any work. We should get rid of her. We should get another daaii maan here." That I don't do any work, that she is doing all the work alone. Like this, she is telling these lies. In SVS she is telling these lies. Even she wrote it down on paper for them…***

Ken: ***She wrote it on paper?***

S-B: ***Yes. To explain to them the trouble.***

Husband: ***To explain this trouble to them (SVS).***

S-B: ***She sent a written report to SVS.*** (Now whispering in a very low voice, pulling her chuni[17] over her head further, as if ashamed) ***She said that they should look at my work, what I am doing, that "Bhaii, look at her work and see what she is doing. Shanti-Baaii is not doing the work, see what she is doing."***

Husband: ***"See if she is working or she is not working." Like this she told them. I did not go to the SVS meeting in Jhilaasanaa because of this fight. Three times I did not go. Kalawaati is going to the meeting, so I am not going.***

Mahesh: ***So, did the SVS people tell you to sort this out, or what did they say?***

S-B: ***Yes. They said this is not a fight with SVS, this is a fight because of your house. They said, "Don't talk about that here." Whatever the fight is, don't talk to them. They said, "Shanti-Baaii, don't say anything."***

Mahesh: ***So, she is not working in SVS now?***

S-B: ***She is working. But for the past year she is not working. For a year.***

Ken: ***So SVS did not tell you to come to Leelapur that day in May? They told Kalawaati, but not you?***

Husband: ***That morning Amar Singh from SVS came here*** (to the house) ***and said, "People are coming from outside. We are going to meet you here, in Sulaawaas." They were going to do the meeting here. But then they told us to go to Leelapur, because of this problem.***

S-B (continuing in very hushed tones): ***Three days before the meeting, ben-jii*** (local government nurse based in BaNaawaT) ***told me that people are coming here, get the school ready. She said, "People are coming, get the water ready, get the place ready because people are coming here for a meeting. Then the headmaster of the school said***

[17] Chuni is a long scarf-like cloth women wear to cover their bodies and heads.

> ***no one is coming for this meeting. So he went to Leelapur, he said, "We can give the meeting in Leelapur. People are there. So, we can give the meeting in Leelapur. We can't give the meeting here, no one will come, so you come to Leelapur." So I went to Leelapur. The meeting was in Leelapur, so I went to Leelapur.***

When queried about how she learned about the "Big Meeting," Shanti-Baaii immediately began telling us the story of how she was initially overlooked by SVS organizers of the "Big Meeting" who had called Kalawaati, instead. I had not heard her version of the events prior to our meeting at Shanti-Baaii's home, and I was intrigued by her tale of moving the venue for the meeting and her jockeying to remain at the center of the action even when she was not informed until the day of the event. Shanti-Baaii suggested that, because of the rift between her and her neighbor, the local SVS workers purposefully neglected to inform her of the planned shift from the Sulaawaas schoolhouse to Leelapur. Whereas Kalawaati had been working with SVS for nearly a decade, Shanti-Baaii was relatively new to the organization, with only three year's experience at the time of the "Big Meeting." The SVS Health Coordinator for Jhiilaasanaa Block told me that local patients generally preferred Kalawaati to Shanti-Baaii; and, although she was supposed to be a general health advisor and assistant to the women of the Sulawaas area, many women also preferred to call Kalawaati than Shanti-Baaii when it came time to deliver their babies. As the Traditional Birth Attendant, Shanti-Baaii had yet to gain the trust and respect of the women of her village for

her role. She seemed to view the "Big Meeting" as a place where she could not only demonstrate to the SVS doctors and the "outsiders" how well prepared she was for deliveries and pre-natal or post-natal care, but it also provided her a forum to prove to her fellow villagers that she is also the best local person to perform these tasks, better than Kalawaati.

Shanti-Baaii's Introduction at the 'Big Meeting'

Among the villagers present at the "Big Meeting," Shanti-Baaii was the primary resource person who performed a practical demonstration of the TBA activities for the guests. She is also the woman who raised her hand when Dr. Sharma asked the Traditional Birth Attendant to identify herself for the foreigners. After his introduction of the foreigners to the villagers, Dr. Sharma directed his questions to one of the foreign women present at the meeting:

> *Language key (unlike in the previous chapter, this section is translated without the first original language column included):
>
> - *English: Italics, [regular]*
> - **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
> - ***Mewari: Italics, bold***
>
> Dr. Sharma (to the villagers): **They are here looking at all of the work, the kind of work that you are doing, what should be done. They are looking at all of your work.** (Aside to Dr. Whitcomb) *You are a doctor?*
>
> Dr. Whitcomb: *I'm an anthropologist.*
>
> Dr. Sharma: *Anthropologist.*
>
> Dr. W: *and nurse, also.*

Dr. S (hesitates for a moment, as if pondering what this might mean): *Hmm. I see.* (To the villagers-) **And she too, in this, how is everything going on, what should happen here, she is looking at everything. So, welcome her too, right? One more time** (Dr. Sharma begins clapping, a few people in the crowd follow his lead.) **Now will you ask them something?** (To the guests in general) *Would you like to ask them something?*

Susan Clark: *Yes. I would like to ask the daaiis* (TBAs) *about the work. Actually, I'd like them to tell me about it.*

Dr. S: **The oldest daaii maan who is the most senior here who can say something, someone speak up. She is asking you what work you are doing.**

(After a pause of about ten seconds, Shanti-Baaii begins standing up from among the crowd to speak.)

Dr. Narayan (in a friendly tone): **No, no, sit down, sit down, sit down…**

Dr. Sharma: (Raising his voice above the crowd.) **Sit down!**

Dr. N: *but* **come forward a little bit, come to the front just a bit.**

Dr. Whitcomb: *They could come sit here, yeah…*

Susan Clark: *Yeah.*

Dr. Narayan: *Can the daaiis come and sit here?*

Baxii-saahab: (SVS in-charge for the Jhilaasanaa Block activities, speaking in a commanding tone): **Daaii, come forward a bit! Daaii maan, come up to the front!**

Dr. Sharma: **Come up, come up.** (Then aside to Dr. Joshi:) **Where is this bad smell coming from?**

Dr. Joshi to Dr. Sharma: *Fish* **and the like.**

Bhop-jii (the owner of the house where they are sitting): **No, there is water shortage, animals have died there, um, in the pond over there.**

Dr. Joshi: *hmmm…*

Dr. Sharma: **Okay,** *of course they…*

Dr. Joshi (interrupting Dr. Sharma's comment on the dead animals, then introduces the daaii maan now standing a bit away from the guests): *She is Shanti-Baaii…*

Susan Clark (in a slightly irritated, raised tone of voice): *Can they come forward a bit?*

Dr. Narayan (in a more irritated and commanding tone than earlier): **Can you people come forward a bit? A little forward…**

Modi-Saahab: **In the front, here…**

Dr. Sharma: *Shanti-Baaii…*

Modi-Saahab: **Shanti-Baaii, come forward a bit more.**

Dr. Joshi: **Please sit…**

Dr. Sharma: **Shanti-Baaii, don't worry, it's ok, no problem. They are just like us, eh?**

Dr. Joshi: ***Yes. We speak Mewari, they speak English.*** **There is no difference.**

Dr. S: **Yes.**

Dr. Harold Drumm (to Dr. Narayan): *Do you think it would be ok to take a picture?*

Dr. Narayan (seemingly surprised): *Of course.*

Dr. Sharma (at first addressing Shanti-Baaii, then switching to English and addressing the guests): **Ok, so you… this is Shanti-Baaii**. *Traditional Birth Attendant. She is Shanti-Baaii.* (To Shanti-Baaii

now) **Where do you work, child?**

Shanti-Baaii: ***Sulaawaas***

Dr. Sharma: **In Sulaawaas.** *He is…* (Turning to Dr. Joshi) **In Sulaawaas, that woman Kalawaati has not come?**

Sushmita Jain (Zonal Worker for SVS, whose responsibilities include overseeing SVS projects in several villages including Leelapur-BaNaawaT-Sulaawaas): **She has a legal case, so she went there, to Jhilaasanaa village.**

(At the mention of the Kalawati's court case, several villagers repeat what Sushmita Jain said.)

Several Villagers at once: **She has a case, she has a case…**

Dr. Sharma: **A case, oh…** (Quickly changing the topic back to Shanti-Baaii sitting before them and addressing the guests in English now) *She is the worker in Sulaawaas! We wanted to go first there, so she has come over here.*

Dr. Whitcomb (seeming pleasantly surprised): *Ooohh!*

Susan Clark (speaking rapidly): *Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. So please thank her for coming.*

Dr. Whitcomb (as if to underscore how impressed she is that Shanti-Baaii would come all the way from the neighboring village one kilometer away): *Yeah!*

Dr. Sharma (in a booming voice to Shanti-Baaii and the crowd): **She is saying, "Thank you for coming here!"**

Dr. Narayan (smiling and chuckling quietly on the side): *Mm-hmm.*

In this two-minute introduction of Shanti-Baaii, ten people are speaking, instructing her and another female TBA where to sit while side conversations

continued throughout; and during the entire process, Shanti-Baaii herself said only one word: "Sulaawaas," the name of her village. When Dr. Narayan asked Shanti-Baaii to sit down after initially standing up to speak, Dr. Sharma also insisted on the same. Then Dr. Narayan asked her instead to come to the front of the group of villagers, but Shanti-Baaii and the second *daaii maan* hesitated when asked to come forward. They stood in the middle of the group, apparently confused about how to step over the rest of the villagers and not sure about where exactly they should sit. Their hesitation to move to the front may have been due to the fact that only men were seated at the front, while the women were grouped together in the corner of the verandah at the back. Typically, in any gathering of men and women in this area, the men sit in front while the women sit together at the back of the crowd.

The men at the very front of the group of villagers were the leaders of the community, including Bhop-jii, the owner of the house where they are sitting. Shanti-Baaii may have felt hesitant to sit right next to him. While the foreigners (including Dr. Narayan) expressed a practical (and Western) desire to have the main speaker, man or woman, seated comfortably in front of them, the villagers preferred maintaining traditional separations between genders and village hierarchies.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sharma became concerned about the bad smell emanating from the nearby dried-up pond just near the verandah. It smelled of feces and rot,

and Bhop-jii explained that because of the severe water shortage at at that time, animals had died in and around the dried-up watering hole. Dr. Sharma seemed concerned that the smell could distract the visitors and also give them a bad impression of local conditions, including sanitation. In fact, there was no indication that the foreigners were concerned about the smell, and Dr. Joshi effectively kept the attention of the visitors on the introduction of Shanti-Baaii.

As she sat in the preferred place right in front of the guests, Dr. Sharma noticed that Shanti-Baaii was hesitating, and he said, "**Shanti-Baaii, don't worry, it's ok, no problem. They are just like us, eh?**" He apparently assumed that Shanti-Baaii was shy or nervous to sit right in front of the foreigners because they are so different from her. Given that Shanti-Baaii later told us that before that meeting she had learned to be very comfortable when speaking with foreigners, it seems more likely that she was more hesitant to sit alongside the male village elders at the front of the crowd, as mentioned above. Dr. Joshi added, "***Yes. We speak Mewari, they speak English.*** **There is no difference.**" Interestingly, he communicated the first comment, "***We speak Mewari, they speak English***," in Mewari, perhaps to emphasize his closeness to Shanti-Baaii and her community; but he then immediately switched to Hindi when he says "**There is no difference.**" In fact, as we will see in the next section, just as Shanti-Baaii was not at all shy about speaking with the foreigners, she also had no qualms about speaking Mewari to the foreign guests.

Dr. Sharma posed his first question to Shanti-Baaii, "**Where do you work, child?**" Shanti-Baaii is a woman about forty years old with three grown children. This manner of speech, addressing anyone junior as "beTaa" (meaning "child" or "boy) or as "beTii" (meaning "child" or "girl") is quite common in urban North Indian households. This is often viewed as an endearing term between an elder and a younger person, but it also clearly demarcates unequal relationships between people. In other contexts, I have also seen the term used rather unsubtly to "put someone in their place" when an older person is getting exasperated or annoyed with a younger person. Dr. Sharma did not seem to intend the latter meaning when addressing Shanti-Baaii, but he clearly viewed the relationship between himself and Shanti-Baaii like a parent and child or a teacher and student. Furthermore, I never heard any adult among the *gariib log* of Leelapur-BaNaawaT address another adult as "beTii" or "beTaa." Shanti-Baaii may have been confused or even offended by Dr. Sharma's reference to her as "child," although this is not clear from the interaction. In response to his question, though, she offered only a single-word response, "Sulaawaas."

Shanti-Baaii turned out not to be nearly as shy as her SVS interrogators and foreign guests thought she would be. Her voice was clear and forceful when the doctors' questions finally turned to practical issues of how many deliveries she performed in a month, how she taught her fellow villagers about "spacing"

their children by at least two or three years, and even how she informed them about the importance of using of condoms to prevent unwanted pregnancies. In fact, once she began speaking, she spoke freely with little or no guidance from any of the "big people" present at the meeting. In spite of being initially referred to as a "child" by Dr. Sharma, and being commanded to move here, sit there, she appeared to maintain a strong sense of why she was there, and what she wanted to achieve by participating at the meeting.

Shanti-Baaii's Personal Agenda for Attending the 'Big Meeting'

After Shanti-Baaii's one-word response to where she lives and works, Dr. Sharma suddenly asked where Kalawaati was:

> Dr. Sharma: **In Sulaawaas.** *He is…* (Turning to Dr. Joshi) **In Sulaawaas, that woman Kalawaati has not come?**
>
> Sushmita Jain: **She has a legal case, so she went there, to Jhilaasanaa village.**
>
> Several Villagers at once: **She has a case, she has a case…**

Many people seemed aware of the reason Kalawaati could not be there, and in an interaction where the villagers generally had said very little until this point, their repetition of "She has a case" could be interpreted as a feeling among at least some in the local crowd felt that Kalawaati was the person who should have been present to represent SVS health projects to the foreign guests. Even if

other villagers questioned her skills and experience as the best *daaii maan*, the foreign guests did not challenge her authority to demonstrate her knowledge and experience at the meeting. To the contrary, they encouraged her to speak in depth, while the rest of Shanti-Baaii's neighbors had to listen patiently, as well. I later learned in discussions with some residents of Sulaawaas and workers from SVS that this meeting did not change the minds of those villagers skeptical about Shanti-Baaii and her legitimacy as the local *daaii maan*. The "Big Meeting," however, at least provided Shanti-Baaii with an unusually high profile development setting to attempt to bolster her position in her community through her performance. Her personal agenda to attain legitimacy and respect in Sulaawaas was furthered, if not achieved, by the meeting with the NADA professionals. At the same time, both the NADA professionals and the SVS managers from Udaipur had no notion whatsoever that Shanti-Baaii had to overcome the obstacles of first not being invited, then learning at the last minute of the shift from Sulawaas to Leelapur just to be present that morning. Her motivation to take center stage once she was there was also very strong; and the "outsiders" apparent preconceptions that, being a rural Rajasthani woman, she would be meek and timid were completely mistaken. For all of her aggressive attitude and "go-getter" approach, however, she remained marginalized by her local peers and potential clients. Perhaps, as one person from Sulawaas told me, she is "too strong."

There is little doubt that Shanti-Baaii possessed the sort of *post-"awakening" consciousness* referred to earlier. Her awareness of the potential use of local development processes to help attain respect and recognition from the outside world and, perhaps eventually, from local villagers was apparently a strong factor in her strategy to become the primary *daii maan* of Sulawaas. Traditionally, the role is passed from one generation to the next within the families of women who care for other women in their village. Shanti-Baaii's mother had been a *daaii maan*, as well. For some reason, Shanti-Baaii could not easily gain the respect of her peers in Sulawaas, in spite of her heritage.

On the other hand, the *post-"awakening" consciousness* in the villagers of Sulawaas, more generally, may have also contributed to the development situation that led to a competition for the title of *daaii maan* in the first place. I do not know how Kalawaati came to the position of Lady Health Worker, or if she is also descended from earlier generations of *daaii maan*s. Particularly if she was not born into this role, then it is possible that the *post-"awakening" consciousness* of many women patients of Sulaawaas led them to prefer Kalawaati since she was trained by SVS professionals first and had a longer history of developing health-related relationships in her village. In any case, one of the effects of development projects and an attending "post-awakening consciousness" in participants at a local level may be to encourage a move in some village roles and responsibilities from those based on tradition and family lineage toward roles based more on

training, skills, and merit. A shift toward valuing Western ideals of "meritocracy" over traditional hierarchies or nepotism would mark a significant impact from a "post-awakening consciousness" on social relations in rural communities.

Shanti-Baaii on "Outside" Visitors

In both the "Big Meeting" and in our interview, Shanti-Baaii demonstrated that she is a remarkably articulate woman who speaks with force and conviction. At the end of our second meeting, I asked her about her experience with foreign and Indian "outsiders" visiting her village.

> Ken: ***So, how many times have people come from outside like that day in Leelapur?***
>
> Shanti-Baaii: ***Three or four times they have come. One time in Leelapur, one time in Mahalpur*** (another neighboring village)***, one time they came right here, from Delhi. You came with them one time.***
>
> Ken: Yes. I came here. The first time people from outside came here, how did you like it?
>
> S-B (smiling, more enthusiastic now): ***I thought it's great! Because these people are coming, and they are requesting that I should also come. They ask me to come to tell them. They call me to tell, how do you do a delivery.*** (Opening her home delivery health kit) ***I show them all the things, this light…*** (taking out a small flashlight)
>
> Ken: ***So, the first time people came from outside, were you a little shy?***
>
> S-B (laughing): ***The first time I was shy, I didn't know what to say! The first time, I went, SVS wanted that, and I was shy because "how should I speak?" People, big, big people have come, so how should I speak? Like that, I was shy. Slowly, slowly, I am not shy now. It broke, that shyness.***
>
> Ken: ***How did it break?***

S-B: ***Several times, I had to speak, I had to speak about condoms. I was shy. But they (SVS) told me you have to speak about condoms. They said, "You can speak about condoms." So, I spoke, and I felt less shy when I spoke then. Now I speak about condoms.***

Mahesh: ***These people who come from outside, do you ask them questions?***

S-B: ***We ask.*** (laughing a little, then hesitating) ***We ask.***

Mahesh: ***When these people come from outside, they ask you questions, you ask them questions? Do they give you answers?***

S-B (quietly, laughing): ***They give.***

Ken: ***Can you ask them questions? Or is the time less?***

S-B: ***Well, when they come, it doesn't come to us to ask them questions. Anyway, Doctor-Saahab asks them questions. For asking, we go to them. They ask us.***

Mahesh: ***If you have any questions, you can ask us. He can speak, you can ask.***

Shanti-Baaii smiles, then says: ***Eat some lunch*** (**roTii**)!

Her response points to the personal change she has undergone with her increasing exposure to "outsiders" as a result of her involvement with local development processes. She lost much of the shyness that she once felt meeting "big, big people." In spite of this, she remained shy to ask most foreigners, including me, many direct questions. In rural Rajasthani society, it is not considered polite to ask too many questions of guests or other respected people. Certain aspects of

traditional hierarchies in Sulaawaas were as yet fundamentally unaffected by the comings and goings of development professionals and anthropologists. At the same time, with exposure to development practices and processes, many people in Leelapur, Sulawaas and BaNaawaT have more questions they might like to ask, even if they remain too polite to actually ask us.[18]

[18] Gender is probably another factor in this interaction with Shanti-Baaii. She did not ask me about myself; but I had conversations with others, such as Heeralaal and Nanalaal, who asked me many personal questions about my life and where I came from.

CHAPTER 4: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE *SANSTHAAN*[1]

This chapter explores perspectives on *vikaas* expressed by professionals and staff working at Shramdaan Vikaas Sansthaan. Their motivations for entering the NGO sector ranged from idealistic to practical. Idealistic motivations among members of the NGO community are perhaps expected, but "outsiders" to development work who believe that the sector should only reward self-sacrifice sometimes frown upon their concern with practical issues of employment and job security. We discuss how varied motivations may color development interactions, such as the "Big Meeting." The NGO workers presented in this chapter were all participants at the Leelapur meeting, which allows us to also look at some of the reasoning and styles of communication behind their comments at the meeting.

DR. SHARMA: "FATHER" OF THE SVS HEALTH UNIT

Dr. Sharma acted as a sort of "conductor" for the "Big Meeting" in Leelapur. He interpreted comments between the "outsider" visitors, the villagers, and the SVS staff and management, monitoring and even directing the flow of the information. He seemed to want at times to control the situation and interactions. With more than thirty years experience in the Rajasthan State Government and ten years experience as the Health Unit Director for SVS, Dr. Sharma was a senior doctor who expected and commanded respect. He was one of the first people I interviewed at beginning of my field research, just one month after my arrival at SVS. Almost immediately, I developed a strong respect for his perspective,

[1] "Sansthaan" is the Hindi word for "institution," which is the commonly used term to refer to "NGO" in local parlance.

including his manner for communicating with his staff and villagers. I interviewed him on a warm February afternoon in his office at SVS headquarters in Udaipur, three months before the "Big Meeting." Speaking almost entirely in English, he told me the remarkable story of how he came to work in the NGO sector, and at SVS, in particular. His tale, long and winding, explained how his motivations for "serving the poor people" were formed in his early experience as a government physician working in rural areas during the 1970s.

> Ken: Today I am mostly interested to ask you a few questions about your background, how you came to be involved with the Health Unit. And why you chose to come into the SVS Health Unit. What you did before you came to SVS, a few personal things. Just basically how you came into this field.
>
> Dr. Sharma: Actually, in the year nineteen seventy-two, I met with an accident, I would say, when I had to go to one village called Paaliyaa-Khedaa, in Dungarpur District, in Aaspur Block. There I happened to visit one village called Paaliyaa-Khedaa. And that was when it was just getting dark in that village. After a strenuous touring, I wanted to go to that village and see what type of work is going on about the smallpox containment. There was an epidemic of smallpox, and I wanted to go and see, what type of work is going on there.
>
> There, since I was not knowing their language, that VaagaDii language, so what happened, there were my associates, we were eight persons, the medical officer, and other people, the para-medicals. And we visited house to house. We came to one house, and there they were asking my colleague, in their language, the VaagaDii language, about that girl who had suffered smallpox. But she had recovered, and she had gone to attend one marriage, in the same village.
>
> Suddenly, I noticed that an elderly lady, she came rushing out from that house, and started pelting stones over our vehicle, the vehicle I had taken. And she started pelting the stones. The driver, seeing the glasses and other things would be broken, he took away the vehicle, leaving us behind. That was his duty, actually, so he took it away from there.

Then some of our people told me that that lady is very furious, and asking help from her other villagers, so we should run away, or else we would be caught. So we started running. I also accompanied them for some distance. Then I asked them, 'What happened? Why are you running?'

Then we suddenly heard drum beatings, drum beatings down by that house. And that was the responding. They responded the call of that lady. The result that, uh, and we started running. And we had torches (flashlights), so they knew where we are going. And they were coming, they just followed us…

Ken: But you still don't know why? Or what happened?

Dr. Sharma: What happened, I could not know. 'Why are you running?' I asked them to stop. 'Why are you running? Why don't you make them understand what for we have come? We have come for a good cause. But, uh, they won't listen to me, because they won't be able to understand us, and now it is dangerous. So, again, they wanted to run.

I have heard the similar story before also.

Then after, some a time, within say a few steps, after a few steps, I asked them to stop. And that was the night time, and we had that torch. So, I could locate one hut. I went there myself, and asked that hutman, '*yeh kaun hai?*' ('who is this?'). And luckily, he happened to be a teacher of that area. A primary school teacher. He listened to us. But when I was just talking there, all of them they assembled. And with sword, and what you call '*bhaalaa*' (spear) and '*pathar*' (stone), they started beating us. My colleagues, they surrounded me, I was just at the center, and they started beating.

With a very difficulty, that teacher, he could pacify them. But they won't get pacified. You see, they stopped beating us, but they even wanted… Then they arrested us, all of us. Four persons, they were behind me, they wanted that we should sit somewhere, and just listen to them and ask them certain things.

Then this teacher, he asked me, asked us to go to his school. And we were taken to his school, just one hut. We were just *pushed*, as we were the culprits…

Ken: Treated like criminals…

Dr. Sharma: Yes. And then we were all locked. But out of eight, one person ran away. And we were just locked from outside. And they wanted that a fire should be set, so that there will be no trace of these persons.

But that vehicle was there. 'How you will be able to burn that vehicle? Some trace of the visitors will be there. And we will be caught.'

Ken: The driver was there now also?

Dr. Sharma: No, the driver and that vehicle had gone some distance. And what happened, they stopped that vehicle. They stopped the vehicle, and then they started beating, furiously. He had lot of blood-letting. And he was locked in another hut there. We did not know.

Then what happened, in short, it took about eight hours. At one-thirty in the night that we were released, when they were convinced that we are not the persons.

What happened, there was a rumor at that time, that one dam will not get completed unless some children, some twenty or twenty-five children, they will be sacrificed. So, that lady, she misunderstood us, and she thought that "they have come here to take away the children." That's why they (we) are asking for that girl, who had the smallpox, in short. But otherwise, we were very much shocked. And here it is (*pulling up his shirt sleeve to show me a long scar on his upper arm*), the injury…

Ken: Jeez…

Dr. Sharma: Huh? At that time I did not know, because they all surrounded me. I don't know some, *laathii charge* (baton beating), or stone-throwing, I don't know. And that medical officer, he…

(Then one of his assistants enters the room for a signature. He signs the paper and tells her in Hindi to take it. He then turns his attention back to me.)

Dr. Sharma: So what happened… (Looking at the cassette recorder on the desk) You are recording it? I see! (smiling)

Ken: Yeah. I'm curious. This is an interesting story.

Dr. S.: Aahh. Then, of course, at the end of the night, they released us, and they got convinced. And, uhh, …

K: Do you know how they got convinced?

Dr. S.: (Laughing) Convinced? That takes a lot of time (to tell). More than eight hours, you know…

K: But you were doing the convincing?

Dr. S.: No, I was not doing myself, but that teacher, he was convincing them. And then they got feared that "He is the big doctor, and the entire village will be in trouble if he is killed." That was the also… I don't know what happened.

K: So, who were the colleagues who were with you? They were government people?

Dr. S: Yes, government people. I was myself posted here. Here I was posted, but I had a very big area, about consisting eight districts. I was looking after the primary health center people, and the way it is being run. So, that way I was in charge of those eight districts.

So, what happened, I was telling you. I was telling you how did it occur. They had a meeting sort of. One group wanted that they (we) should be killed, and one group wanted that "No, but what would happen about that?" Then that fellow teacher pacified them that "No, this is…"

Then they took us, in the same way to that house where that lady, they wanted to ask that lady, "What happened there?" And, there again they got furious, and they started beating us again. When they reached to that lady's house.

Then, luckily, one of the fellow there, one of the villagers, he, uh, one of our paraworkers could speak with him *ki* (*that*) "Listen, I was there day before yesterday with you, and I had taken…

(Suddenly Dr. Sharma changes topics, remembering an important detail.) And they wanted that this torch should not be on. They get irritated. Hardly you will find a light there. Hmm?

K: Yeah, they're not used to that.

Dr. S.: *Haan* (*Yes*), they are not used to that. And they get furious. That teacher did tell us. So, we did not. But he could note that when these queries were going on, that old man, one of the old men, one of our staff (the paraworker) he could talk with him. "Were you not there? I had got the fire from you to cook my meals." He recollected that "Yes, you did come." He (the old man) also joined the teacher that "no, these are the other persons. They are the good persons, they have come."

But because they have beaten us and all, now they started fearing that "Now they will go to the police. They will report to the police. And police will harass us. So, they wanted our statement that no harm had been done, but that teacher was the only…, and it took more than one and half hours to prepare that. Then I signed that letter. Then, when it went to that driver, he was also made to sign. But he had some blood. And blood was there, on the paper. He was very much frightened. He was beaten serious. So that blood. Then, they say, "Oh! The blood is there. The paper will be useless." And then another paper was prepared. And hardly could they find paper. He had to go to his school and get one. So, this thing happened, and it took one and half (hours).

Then, they just wanted to send us off. And two people will be there, this side and that side, jeep, and "Nobody will touch you. We are sorry for all that."

Next day, uh, next day, I wanted to visit that village again. But the local people of that PHC (Public Health Centre), they said, "No, they are furious. And again they will get furious. They will do the needful." Hmmm? (Looking at me carefully for my comprehension on this point.)

So, they did not allow me to visit again. But all the time I was thinking that, see, these people still live in the modern India. How ill, misinformed they are. You know, all the time I was thinking.

Then I had to go for some WHO assignments. And it took me one year. But I used to get summons, that case was *challaned* (*filed*) in the court. The local people prevailed upon the medical officer in charge, and the case was moved to the court. And they were all arrested. About eleven persons, including that lady, they were arrested. And lot of, rather, they were put in lock-up for twenty-one days or so. And every time, whenever

there will be the evidence, they will be called for the evidence, and they were tortured.

Then, when I returned from my WHO assignment, I was also called, because my name was there, so I attended that court. And there, I said, they asked me, "Do you know these persons?" I said, "No, I don't know anybody. These are not the persons." Because I, too, was very much annoyed with that type of work that police was doing it. So, I said, "I do not recognize." Then the case was dropped.

(He pauses slightly, and places heavy emphasis in his intonation now.) So, *this incident* had rather tempted me to go and do this type of work. That's why I have joined this. That's why I was such. …So, that's why I had that in the back of my mind that I should join this organization when I retired from the government service in 1981.

… I wanted to do some service for these poor people, and misinformed with blind beliefs and all these. So, I joined here in eighty-four, and then it started.

Dr. Sharma's lengthy yet dramatic story of his awakening to the depth of "blind beliefs" held by *gariib log* provides us with greater insight into how he viewed his role in development interactions with villagers and donor representatives. He felt that through his work he could bring sight to their blindness, beliefs replete with superstition and hearsay. He also comes across here as a man in the habit of being in control of situations, or at least at the center of situations he cannot control, such as the one described above. In this story, he described himself as a "big doctor." Having worked in government service for decades before coming to SVS, his style of speaking and interacting with villagers, and even with many of his staff, remained rather patriarchal. Dr. Sharma's style of interacting was still common throughout much of the country, particularly among professionals whose notions of professional behavior were

formed during the Nehruvian socialist period of the nation's history, between Independence and the late 1980s.

In our second interview a little more than a month later, Dr. Sharma explained other reasons why he wanted to get into the NGO sector to help villagers with his health care and education expertise. These included applying his medical skills to develop a rural healthcare system modeled on the "barefoot doctor" example successfully implemented in China in the 1970s. In a society transitioning from staunchly hierarchical systems and beliefs to one holding more egalitarian ideals, Dr. Sharma's increasingly outdated ways of working and communicating were bound to cause friction particularly with some of the college-educated, young professionals recently hired at SVS. Generation gaps between "the old guard" at SVS, including Dr. Sharma and other leadership, and the young professionals and staff were more pronounced during the period I was researching than they tend to be now. At that time, like much of Indian society in general, SVS was transitioning from traditional, hierarchical styles to relatively open, modern ways of working that sought to value each person's input equally.

In spite of his attempts to incorporate notions of development based on "partnerships," "collaborations," and "participation" in his "on stage" behavior with donors, Dr. Sharma's beliefs were clearly and unshakably founded in experiences and perspectives like those reflected in his story here. His top-down view of development processes was not going to change just because some young professionals fresh from university insisted that there is a new language of development, and new ways to look at how it should be implemented in rural

communities. When Dr. Sharma addressed Shanti-Baaii as "*beTii*" or "child," I believe that he did not mean to offend her in any way. The roots of his way of communicating with villagers were grounded in his belief that they were, like children, full of "blind beliefs" and they needed his help to grow up to participate in the modern world. Of course, his style and patronizing view of development are no longer acceptable, but I was not alone in my appreciation for his experiences and personal integrity. Perhaps summarizing his approach best, Dr. Narayan described him as "a very committed person, even if his education was a long time ago."

Discussions with other employees at SVS about their motivations and aspirations for working in the NGO sector pointed to an even more critical organizational split than that of generational difference. The primary distinction among many of the staff at SVS was, "are you a local or a professional staff?"

Taussif: A "Local Staff" Seeking Recognition

Taussif Shah, who became my close friend and associate during my research period in Udaipur, was one of the people I met on the very first day I arrived at the SVS headquarters. He was a seven-year veteran of the organization, and I learned that his motivations for joining and staying with SVS were much more practical than ideological. Taussif graduated from the Udaipur University School of Social Work, and the first job offer he received was not from the state government, as he had anticipated, but instead was from SVS. Taussif spent many days away from Udaipur and his family as he traveled frequently to remote villages throughout Udaipur District. His job was to develop village groups based

on savings plans where participants contributed to a village fund in small amounts each month, usually ten to fifty rupees, which they could then borrow against when they needed to buy a goat, seeds, etc. This freed them from the perpetual indebtedness resulting from loans taken from local moneylenders.

My discussion with Taussif was recorded at the end of my research time in Udaipur, after I had already built a strong friendship with him and others at SVS. Our conversation, spoken in Hindi, centered on two main themes: first, the need to build good relationships with the *gariib log* where one works, and second, the disparities at SVS between the non-local, young professionals and local, long-term staff.

(English words spoken in Hindi are marked here in italics.)

Taussif: We live in the area, do work with the people at their side. So, after some time, they can believe in someone who used to be an outsider, because we live there, work there, and we do the work according to them, not us. So, the trust comes.

Ken: It seems from this that some personal relationships are formed.

Taussif: From this two types of *relation* are formed at the same time. Personal *relation* is formed because we live with the people, or even in their home. Or with whomever the *contact* is more, *after office hours contact* is there, too. So, this personal *relation* is formed. You are living in the village, chatting with the people, *meeting* with the people, *so that is official relationship*. So, both *relations* are made, personal when we go to their weddings or funeral, *personal* after *office time*. That is a *personal relation*. In the work also *relation* comes. Like when we are building a *check* (dam). Or for *wasteland* a *boundary* wall is built. Like if we helped them to build a *boundary* to grow their grass, keep their livestock, then from the work, *official relation* is made. There is a clear benefit for the village.

But at the same time, with that person who has the benefit, there is personal *relation*. Because of the personal *relation* people believe in our word.

Ken: When a new person comes to replace someone from SVS who has worked in the village for a long period, building trust and good relations, how do people in the village view the newcomer?

Taussif: If a new person comes, the work cannot go as well for some time. Because his *personal* behavior that he shows, it all depends more on this. If the new person speaks for himself, then people will believe more, but if he only speaks from the office, then people will have less trust. For instance, suppose that the old person spoke in a good manner, but for the new person everything is just about the work and he doesn't try to meet the people, just leaves back home to Udaipur as soon as the work is done for the day, then he doesn't *socialize* with the people.

Ken: And for the other outsiders who come?

Taussif: The people who live there with the people have personal *relation*, but if people come from outside, their *relation* is different. For the people who come from Udaipur (SVS headquarters) people just see someone from SVS. They see the SVS board somewhere, they know SVS, and they see someone from SVS Udaipur as just that.

People from Sulaawaas know that there is a zonal office nearby. From there the big *office* is at Jhiilaasanaa. From Jhiilaasanaa, the big *office* is Udaipur. This is what the people know. They don't know much more than that about the people from outside. For these people, it is just an *institutional relation*, *bas.* So, they will get some *response* from the people, like "He has come from SVS." But that's it. The NGO *relation* comes first. The personal *relation* comes after.

Taussif's emphasis on the importance of forming strong relationships with villagers in order to be effective as an NGO worker was repeated by nearly every SVS person I met who spent a lot of time in "the field." A good fieldworker cannot simply do a day's work and return home to the family for dinner. He or she must stay on and "socialize with the people." The abilities of local staff and

young professionals, who are essentially "outsiders," to form strong connections with villagers are clearly not the same, and the work is similarly affected. Basically, whereas young professionals may know all the latest development lingo and cool concepts, they may not be well equipped to actually put those ideas into action when compared with local staff members who understand how to develop strong relations and build upon those foundations for long-term development activities in the villages where they work.

Toward the end of my conversation with Taussif, he commented at length on the "professionalization" of SVS, especially in terms of salaries. While he had worked with SVS for more than seven years, he still received less salary than the "starting salary" of the young professionals hired from name-brand educational institutions, such as Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai or the Institute of Rural Management at Anand (IRMA) in the neighboring state of Gujarat. He said that the top people at SVS tend to "prefer these professionals to the locals. I don't know why."

Taussif also mentioned that many of them tend to leave the organization for better-paid opportunities after just a few months, "time enough only to learn the things. They don't even come to know how to meet the people in the villages, since they don't know their traditions. For instance, Gauri. They won't know that during this (month-long) festival, they cannot meet anyone in the Adi-Vasi villages. They will go and come back, saying, "I could not meet anyone." But

they should know that no one is there during the festival. Slowly, they will learn the things from us, the locals. Then they leave, and the whole investment goes with them." But the preferential treatment these young professionals receive from the SVS management affects the work of the locals. Although the local staff tends to work the most in village areas, some of them also feel that they are not properly appreciated or compensated. This has a negative impact on their morale, leaving them feeling, as Taussif said, that they "are only in it for the job, just to get a salary." He went on to say that, "if you have something, some problem, in your mind that you bring there (to the village), that will also affect the relation with the people." He went on to mention how this could affect the work at all levels, as local employees of SVS were tending to become increasingly preoccupied with the difference in salaries. He said simply, "They (the professionals) do less work and get more pay. We (the locals) do more work and get less pay."

Ajit-jii: Committed to SVS in the Face of Doubts

Ajit, Taussif's peer in age, seniority, and tenure at SVS, was a Health Educator working in Jhilaasanaa Block. His duties ranged from training local village paraworkers and villagers to looking after budgets and staff activities at the block office. His surname, changed here as with all informants to maintain anonymity, is a Brahmin name, indicating that his family is from an upper-caste

background. In our conversation, he mentioned that his family has a long heritage in Udaipur City with strong ties to his upper-caste community.

Ajit-jii's conversation with me focused on how he came to work at SVS and the NGO sector, more generally. His tale was a familiar one to many of the local staff working at SVS, having made practical decisions to join this field when government positions proved difficult to obtain. He also hinted at the difficulties of working in the NGO sector as a local staff member, particularly in terms of the impact on his family. Our conversation was held entirely in Hindi, and the style of Hindi Ajit tended to use, commonly referred to as "*shuudh Hindii"* ("pure Hindi"), clearly pointed to his relatively very high level of academic education. On the other hand, his education had been primarily been conducted in Hindi, so his English, like that of many educated small city Indians, was not very strong. He preferred to speak in eloquent Hindi than in broken English. As with Dr. Sharma, I initially asked Ajit-jii why and how he had come to work with SVS and the NGO sector, in general.

> (English words spoken in Hindi are marked here in italics.)
>
> Ken: One question that I have is, how did you decide to get into this profession, to go in this direction to work with an NGO?
>
> Ajit: In this direction of NGOs? Well, at first I was not decided what work I want to do. I thought, first I will study, then after studies will get into government service, because I had so many friends who became bankers, teachers, etc. And so I also thought that once my studies were completed, I would get a job in the government service. And my family, too, thought the same because most people are in government service. We have a lot of teachers. So, that was my plan, to finish my studies quickly, then I would become a teacher. But when I did my BA at Udaipur University, then I completed my degree, and I did well there. I was in the second class (a high ranking among the students), so I easily got a number

> (position) that would allow me to become a teacher. So, my family told me to fill out the form to become a teacher, and I filled it out. My mind was made up to become a teacher, since everyone was also teaching in my family. But it was really not a big thing to become a teacher because everyone is teaching among my relations.
>
> Suddenly, I had a thought that I should go into some other line. Then my whole family got angry, saying "You think that you can just do whatever you like. What is your plan?" Then, after that, I did an MA in History. I had a lot of interest in History as a subject. I studied about a lot of places, Russia, India, America.

Ajit's family's concern with his career path was a common characteristic of traditional, urban middle-class families where more than just the nuclear family was dependent on the income of the head of the household. From the time of Independence until very recently, when the "new economy" of the private sector was suddenly growing very rapidly, most middle-class families preferred their children to join the government service, known for its stable income and good long-term benefits. The NGO sector, by comparison, was relatively less understood, and most families tended to believe that it was not such a reliable source of income or benefits. In addition, the issue of prestige also became important for many middle-class families, as NGOs were commonly viewed as less prestigious employers than the government offices. Ajit went on to describe how he joined SVS:

> After completing my MA, I started working in a primary Christian school, teaching Hindi and History. Then after that, I had a friend working with environmental and health issues. I decided to do a two-year diploma in health and environment. Having completed my diploma, I really did not know anything about any NGO work. In my experience, I had never had the opportunity to come in contact with NGOs at that point. I really did

not even know what an NGO is. I thought that after all my studies, I would go in for some (government) service. So what is an NGO, what is not an NGO, I had no idea.

I had done my diploma in Jaipur (the state capital of Rajasthan), so I thought I would find a position in government. But I decided to return home to Udaipur, and I got a short-term job teaching at a school again.

At that time, UNICEF had a big project going on, SWACH. So a vacancy came up in that project, which was about preventing the spread of guinea worm disease.[2] It was a training post, going from village to village, training people about how to prevent the spread of this disease.

Ken: What year was this?

Ajit: This was eighty-seven to eighty-eight. There were marches, training, door to door contact in the villages. This was in the health field, which was my training, so I was selected. There were fifty-two applicants, and I was number six, so I got into the first "*batch*" (group). So, then I did that work, with people who came from Jaipur and Delhi to train us working in this area.

All of the officials who came to see this program were very impressed by how well that program was conducted, how we went and lived in the villages with the people, built good relations with the people. So everyone was very happy with that program.

I also have a big interest in music. There is also a big interest in the villages about music, too. So I used to play music with them, and living with them, playing music, I became friends with many people in these villages. From that experience, an awakening occurred within me that, living with these people in the villages, I can build good relations like this.

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[2] Global Eye, a development periodical, describes the guinea worm disease and SWACH, "Rajasthan has many step wells, (with spiral steps down to the bottom), inside of which families bathe, drink, and wash. If an infected person with an open blister steps into the water to ease the itching caused by the guinea worm, the female worm can inject her larvae into the water. The SWACH project aimed to break this cycle of infection in a number of ways: 1) converting the step wells into draw wells (which people cannot step inside), 2) providing handpumps as an alternative way of supplying drinking water, 3) teaching people to filter water before drinking it, 4) using local techniques to extract the worm before it breaks through the patient's skin. As a result of such measures the number of cases of guinea worm in SWACH's area of work has dropped substantially. (Global Eye:1997)

Among that first batch of trainees in the SWACH program, there were several people from SVS, too. Because the UNICEF project also joined with some NGOs for doing the work. So, I had some friends now from SVS.

So, we used to be in these marches together, doing the training together, and in the evenings we used to sit together and chat. So that was how I learned about the SVS work. Those people would say, "We also go into the villages, and we do all these types of work." So, I learned all about SVS from them.

Then I also thought that I should join with SVS. Because SWACH was working on this one integrated project about Guinea Worm, but SVS is doing all kinds of work, Women's Development, and this and that. I thought that if I join SVS, then I will also be able to learn a lot more about *vikaas*. But I did not want to upset my path by shifting to another organization, so I kept working with SWACH for more than a year and a half.

After that I asked SWACH to make me permanent, but they refused, saying, "We cannot make you permanent." They were thinking that this program is just for a fixed time, and after that who will take responsibility for me? So, I could see that there were some internal problems, but there were others with me whose positions were made permanent, and they got government postings from that. I asked them, "If there is any problem with my work, or any problem with my education, then please tell me. If there is anything lacking, then please tell me." But they said there was no problem with my work, but others were made permanent and not me. So, I began to lose interest in working with them, because I needed to have something after that project ends.

That was in my mind when I read in the paper that there were four or five vacancies at SVS for Health Educators. So, I applied, because I had been interested in SVS for some time already. I filled the form, I was called for an interview. But before I went for the interview, I thought, "I don't have any good contacts there (at a high post), so how can this be possible? Because there can be some *politcs*, or someone else may have good contacts there.

So, that was in my mind when I went there. I went that morning and when I arrived there I saw that there were about thirty-five or forty others there

> for the interview. Some had come from Jaipur, some from Ajmer and other places. And there were also people who had *higher qualification* than me. I spoke with some people there, and it seemed very difficult and unlikely for me. So I set my mind that I won't get an offer.
>
> But then I went for the interview, and after the interview I got *confidence* that I might get the job. Because the questions they asked, I gave very *solid* answers. That is why I felt I might have a chance. So, after three or four days, I got a call, "Come and join at SVS."

He was initially worried that he might not be able to obtain an offer from SVS because he lacked personal contacts at the upper levels of the organization, expressing his belief at the time that the NGO sector, like the GO sector, worked to a great extent on systems of "who you know." He was pleasantly surprised to find, however, that he was able to join SVS without such traditional contacts, indicating to him that at SVS, at least, experience, merit, and demonstrated commitment were perhaps the most important qualities they looked for in new hires. While this may not be generalizable to other NGOs or even to all of SVS, this does mark a notable departure from conventional Indian notions of how one might obtain an offer of employment. NGOs working with such approaches and "reasonable compensation" were increasingly viewed by larger segments of middle-class, urban Indian society to be viable alternatives to working either in traditionally coveted yet difficult to attain government service posts or in the new capitalistic, private enterprises that continued to be viewed with skepticism from a historically socialist economic middle-class.

The UNICEF-sponsored Sanitation and Water Community Health Project (SWACH, which also means "clean" in Hindi) that Ajit joined in the mid-1980s is a very well known and highly regarded program that helped to jump-start the

surge in the growth of registered NGOs in the late 1980s and early 1990s in and around Udaipur. The identification of large-scale "successes" such as the SWACH project tend to have ripple effects in the communities where they occur for a long time to come. In the case of SWACH and Udaipur District, this program helped to legitimize the work of NGOs in the eyes of local Udaipur people in the government and the private since this multi-million dollar project was generally viewed as a huge success. Many local people who worked in the project, like Ajit, later moved into established NGOs, while some others also started their own small NGOs after their SWACH experience. In this way, development "successes" bred opportunities for further growth of the NGO sector and for individuals to find gainful, respectable employment in the organizations that saw direct or indirect benefits from the legitimization of their own work in development.

Ajit went on to describe his experiences working at SVS and how he finally decided after many doubts to stay in the organization and the NGO sector.

> Ajit: After coming to SVS, I definitely had some problems to *adjust*, at the start when I came.
>
> Ken: Like what kind?
>
> Ajit: Like we lived in these (rural) blocks far from the city. First, it was hard at home, having to totally leave them like that. The *adjustment* was not just happening on its own. Second, at these very *interior* places you can't take a vehicle. You have to walk on foot. So, I had a problem from that. And in the *field* where I went, people did not know me. At the beginning I had these problems, so much so that I thought at that time that I should leave this work.

Because in the SWACH project there was a situation where they a lot of *facilities*. We all went on motorcycles, on their vehicles…

Ken: Because it is a UN program…

Ajit: Yeah, it was a UNICEF program, so they did a lot of *finance*. There was no problem for vehicles and the like. After coming here, it felt like, "Walking, walking everywhere." So, I really thought about leaving this job for a while.

But I stayed here at SVS, and after some time I made a few friends working here in the block. When I made two or three friends, we developed a really good friendship, working in the *field*, sometimes we also went walking together, going around together. So, slowly, over time, this desire to leave left me, and now this desire does not come into my mind at all!
(Ajit pauses a moment before speaking again.)

Ajit: Now, (looking around the room at the other SVS workers present) see how even on their vacation day these four people are here. We have all different kinds of vacation days, but I don't even feel like taking vacations time.

Ken: Because this is your interest, and your friends are all here…

Ajit: Yes. Because, see, we do this work, and we live in the *field* together, so we don't even feel that we are working. In most jobs, you go there and say, "See I did this work today, I did that today," but working here you don't think about the work as a job.

Ken: So working all day, you don't even get tired?

Ajit: Right, we don't get tired.

Suresh (an SVS colleague of Ajit who has been seated next to him throughout the meeting): It feels just like a home *enviroment*.

Ajit: Yes, it feels just like a home *enviroment*.

Suresh (speaking in English): It's like a total family!

> Ajit: And when we go into the *field*, *as a friend* we speak with the people, sit with the people, hold meetings. In the evening, with all our friends there, we sleep with them. We sing *bhajans*[3] if we feel in the mood. We do this also when we go to the villages. *Entertainment* is also a big part. So, like this, we don't feel that we are doing some big job. *Easily* all of the work gets done.

Ajit-jii's initial problems "adjusting" to the conditions of work at SVS stemmed primarily from his habituation to the experience of working with a well funded, large-scale UN project. Not having the financial support of so many foreign funds in the late 1980s, SVS could not provide the ease of transport or other forms of support to which he had become accustomed. While the difficulties posed by having to walk into the "interior" villages where SVS work is going on may have posed some immediate challenges for Ajit and others, the experience of shifting from arriving in villages in jeeps and motorcycles also has a social and emotional affect on the workers. This points to the importance to local staff hires in the NGO sector of having access to the signs of success and power typically associated with government agencies: vehicles, assistants, etc. While he does not mention it here, SVS notably increased its own fleet of vehicles in the early 1990s as increased funding flowed into the organization, easing workers' movement in rural areas while also enhancing the organization's (and thereby, the workers') prestige in the eyes of villagers, urban onlookers, and one's own family.

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[3] *Bhajans* are Hindu devotional songs sung usually by groups of people to praise various gods and saints. It is still a very popular form of entertainment among villagers where there is no

The primary reason Ajit cited for deciding to stay with SVS in spite of the challenges was the "home environment" feel of working in the field with colleagues who became close friends, as well. The emotional draw of building personal relationships with colleagues at the NGO remained a significant attraction for local staff that might otherwise have joined with a government agency. Similar to Taussif's description of the need and desire to form close personal "relations" with villagers in the course of doing the SVS work, Ajit's comments confirm the importance of social bonding in building long-term associations within the NGO sector. The NGO sector has fewer financial resources to attract and retain qualified candidates than many government or private organizations, but the emotional factors figure prominently in the ability of an NGO to build teams of experienced staff at both the headquarter, block, and zone levels.

In the chain of relationships of a development project, from villagers, rural NGO workers, NGO professionals at the headquarters, right up to the donor representatives, the establishment of trusting relationships is critical to the long-term success of an intervention. In the last chapter, we saw how personal trust and understanding between the donors and the NGO managers can also make or break an agreement to fund and then implement a project. Nevertheless, whether at the village or office levels, the likelihood of misunderstandings that undermine

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electricity.

that trust, or prevent its formation in the first instance, are greater when face-to-face contact is not possible. As Taussif mentioned above:

> People from Sulaawaas know that there is a zonal office nearby. From there the big *office* is at Jhiilaasanaa. From Jhiilaasanaa, the big *office* is Udaipur. This is what the people know. They don't know much more than that about the people from outside. For these people, it is just an *institutional relation*, *bas.*

"Institutional relations" alone, represented in SVS rural program areas by "SVS boards," are generally not sufficient to permit rural NGO workers to gain the trust of villagers in order to be most effective in spreading awareness and desire to participate in the organization's various development activities. Similarly, in order for the money to be allocated by funding agencies to an NGO, institutional relations communicated by email, reports and other long-distance means are rarely sufficient to build up a long-term mutual understanding between the NGO and funding agency for joint projects. At all levels of development projects in Rajasthan, the distinction between "insiders" and "outsiders" is clearly defined, with "outsiders" who are unable to become "insiders" through personal contact and socializing remaining only marginally effective in their capacity to effect change at their respective level in rural development processes.

The conversation later turned to Ajit's family's views on his work with SVS and the NGO sector.

> Ken: What does your family think now about your work? As you said earlier they wanted you to become a teacher. How do they feel about this that you are working with SVS?

> Ajit (pauses a moment to think): Yes, in their minds certainly it came that, umm, now (pauses), that life which is *fixed*, like "ten o'clock he went to the office, completing his job, he came back at five." That kind of life does not happen. (pauses) Rather, "He went away, two days later he is back. He goes in the heat. He goes when there is a lot of work, when there is not so much work, too." That is certain (that they think this way).
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> Sundarlal (another colleague of Ajit, who is a local resident and SVS paraworker, speaking in Mewari): Sometimes you have to work on off days, too. When there is work, you have to work.
>
> Ajit: Yeah, it's true that the family back home goes on worrying. When I bring them here to see, they say, "You live there, no one is there to look after you, if you fall or get a cut. You should stay at home with us under our *nazar* (gaze)[4].
>
> Suresh (in Hindi): They try to understand, but they cannot really understand how decided on this life you can be.

Combined with his family's initial concern that he should clarify his career path, their concern for his welfare and safety also seemed to signal undercurrents of doubt regarding his chosen field. The fact that his was not a "ten to five" job appeared to be a source of discomfort for his family members and, in turn, for himself. This became even clearer when I met him years later, and he told me that he had been reassigned to the Udaipur headquarters. He intimated to me that he was pleased with the shift primarily because his family better understood the nature of his work now. On the other hand, when I asked him if he missed going to the field as often as he had when he was working at the block level, he told me that he missed meeting the people. The vast separation between

the realities of working in the rural "family environment" and the "institutional" environment of the headquarters became more apparent to him only after he had relocated to the Udaipur office.

NGO Legitimacy and Government Ties at the Local Level

The quest for legitimacy at the institutional and personal level was an on-going process for many organizations and individuals working in the NGO sector. One way that both individuals and organizations tended to seek to establish greater credibility, not only in the eyes of donors but within the society at large, was to develop and highlight their ties to government offices and officials. When I asked Ajit to characterize the difference between SVS and other NGOs working in Udaipur District, he responded in the following way:

> Ajit: SVS has greater power. The people know that SVS has more power. The difference is that SVS has *experts*, we have *resource*.
>
> Ken: Resource?
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> Ajit: The other NGO's don't have *resource*. In every area we have *experts*, in health, in environment. So we can do more to work with the people. And the people have trust in SVS. We are joined with entire villages, not just one or two men in a village. The entire village comes along with SVS. People know SVS in this area.
>
> Suresh: SVS has been doing work in education here for a long time.
>
> Ajit: Another difference is that people know that with SVS there has never been a major misunderstanding. SVS sits with the people, does the planning with the people, so for this reason, too, people have faith in SVS. They understand that the planning is theirs. When there is a plan to build

[4] *Nazar* is a general term that loosely translates as "gaze" or "look." But it has a more specific sense of "watchful care" and may also be used to describe the watchful eye of God.

a check-dam[5] SVS does not tell the people about who will do what work. The villagers themselves will decide this. Who will work how many days on the project, these things they decide. … So the people feel that the work is theirs.

Ken: You said earlier that SVS has more power, but what exactly is this power?

Ajit: Well, if SVS has a health program, for instance, then we have experts in the health field. We don't have to look somewhere else for help to make the program work. SVS can launch the program on its own. And if it is necessary, SVS can *involve* the *government*. But when you involve the government, then people think "ok, now we will get some help because the government has come." People would not know that SVS actually did all this work. Because we can usually do this kind of work ourselves. Other NGOs cannot do this.

Ken: Like when the SDO (Sub-District Officer, Jhilaasanaa Block) came…

Ajit: Yes, SDO-Saheb does some coordination, and he is working with us. This is another way that SVS is different and people recognize us. If someone else calls him, he won't come so *easily*. And for such a small program, he came. You saw that today, it was a small program, but he came. And we just asked him verbally to come. There was no written invitation to come. We just said, "There is a program, *Aapko padhaaro*[6]…"

Ajit described here an intriguing and potentially contradictory aspect to "involving the government" in an NGO project or program. While village people tended to ascribe greater credence to programs that include government support, he suggested that the same support may also overshadow the primary role of the NGO designing and directing the project. In Ajit's mind, however, this concern

[5] A check-dams are small dams on seasonal streams that retain rainwater runoff for use later.

was apparently outweighed by the benefits of maintaining strong personal and institutional ties to government agencies and officials. The power to call on the SDO for even a small village-based function and have him turn up for the event demonstrated to the villagers the strength of SVS's ability to involve the most influential (whether positive or negative) forces in the villagers' local experience.

I was present at the village event he referred to in this passage, and I was surprised to see more than fifty people waiting nearly three hours for the SDO to arrive before the scheduled meeting could begin. The reason given for the delay was that a jeep on the road to the village had reportedly hit a young child, and the Adi-Vasi villagers had put up a roadblock to stop all travelers from proceeding until the truck driver guilty of the hit-and-run accident could be apprehended. I found it difficult to believe, however, that the most powerful person in the entire block, the SDO with his accompanying police escort, was unable to persuade the villagers to let him pass. No matter the reason, nothing could begin at the planned village meeting until he arrived. In observing Ajit's behavior as we waited without word of the reason for the delay, I also felt that he appeared worried that he might not come at all, in which case he would lose some of his credibility before the villagers at the meeting. Once the SDO arrived, Ajit was visibly relieved, yet his anxious behavior earlier also suggested to the villagers and me that there was really no comparison in terms of the actual or perceived power in

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[6] *Aapko padhaaro* is a common Mewari phrase, meaning, "you are welcome (to come)." This is

the hands of the NGO or the SDO. Ajit believed that he and the NGO derived power and legitimacy in the eyes of the villagers through his association with the SDO, but not the other way around. The actual perception of this association by the villagers was also likely to be more complex than what Ajit stated. The most fundamental emotion several villagers expressed to me about the SDO and his officers was less respect than fear. In associating closely with the SDO, SVS and Ajit may have also been, in another sense, undermining their associations with the villagers. For Ajit, however, these complications were perhaps less immediate than the benefit he perceived by enhancing his own prestige and that of SVS through his demonstrated connections with local government officials.

Competition Between NGOs for Villagers' Loyalties

Speaking on NGO competition in the field, Ajit also pointed to the desire of some NGOs to attract more village followers instead of looking at long term, sustainable involvement.

> Ken: Resource?
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> Ajit: The other NGO's don't have *resource*. In every area we have *experts*, in health, in environment. So we can do more to work with the people. And the people have trust in SVS. We are joined with entire villages, not just one or two men in a village. The entire village comes along with SVS. People know SVS in this area. …
>
> Ken: Does SVS sometimes work with other NGOs?
>
> Ajit: Yes. At times, we have a project that the government is funding, and we will be working in the same area. Each NGO has its own way of

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also a phrase that is used by the Government of Rajasthan tourism department to draw visitors.

working. That NGO works in its way, and this NGO works in its own way. And similarly, each one has its own *motive*, each has its own *motivation*. And the people can be caught between the two. Then if they are working in two nearby villages, the effect in one village is that, while the effect in the other village is that. Then there is a problem for this NGO and for that NGO. There can even be a kind of revolt.

For example, if in a soil preservation project one NGO says, "We will give you one and a quarter or one and half rupees per tree (planted to build up the topsoil)," then the people's *motivation* will be there. But if another NGO working nearby says, "We will give you five rupees per tree." Then in this village people are getting five rupees per plant, and the people in the other village will see that and say, "Those people are giving five rupees per tree, and here we get only one." Then people will ask straight from the NGO, "Why are you giving only one rupee?" Then it is very difficult to explain it to them why it is less than the other NGO.

If an NGO is working in an area for a long time, then they have to see that today this project is here, but tomorrow this project will not be here. But we have to keep on doing long-term planning with these people. It can happen that some money has come into a project, and there is some work to be done. But some NGOs may think, if we give all the money now, then what are we going to do for *follow up*? There has to be some *saving* for *follow up.*

But these new NGOs that are coming up, they don't think about this, and in order to *attract* the people, they bring these short-term projects to the people. But the older NGOs will not do this. They will keep on working, slowly, slowly, to get the people's involvement. But what happens in that NGO is that they have to face more struggle because everyone will be distracted by the other NGO for some time.

Ken: But why would this competition come about?

Ajit: In order to *attract* the people, the NGO can throw up a project that will get people to join very quickly. This happens. Someone came once with a blanket donation project. (The now infamous program described by Heeralaal in Chapter Three.) And the people were attracted, with people saying, "*Bhai*, these people gave us blankets, gave them blankets." And then people start looking for that kind of NGO, because their *habit* has become such. One may think, "Ok, you gave some blankets. Are you going to give blankets every winter?" When it is cold and they give

> blankets one winter, then the people have gotten this bad *habit* now. Because they will expect blankets to be given again the next year, but the NGO won't be able to give them. And when that NGO can't give the blankets again, people will once again look to the old NGO, and they will join again with them.

In competition between NGOs, the salient factor is "getting people to join" with the NGO. In this passage, Ajit pointed out how discord may arise in a village between villagers and an NGO and between NGOs competing for the loyalties of the villagers. When similar projects are launched in the same rural area by different NGOs, villagers tend to regard differences in income-generating opportunities for their households. Ajit pointed to the fundamental difference between those NGOs who are working with a long-term vision and those that are apparently looking for short-term gains through increasing their affiliations in a particular village. In their reporting requirements, some donor agencies ask the NGO to monitor the number of people who come to meetings and trainings in order to chart the "success" of a particular project. Financial implications may then become linked to how many people are reportedly "joined" with an NGO. Ajit cited the "blanket donation scheme" launched by another NGO with foreign support in Jhilaasanaa Block as an example of an ill-conceived NGO project that actually ended up promoting the "bad habit" in villagers of expecting hand-outs from NGOs and foreigners.

Similarly, I spoke with the zonal level workers for the Sulaawaas-Leelapur-BaNaawaT zone, Pushpa Boliya (Women's Group Coordinator) and

Arvind Singh (Zone Coordinator), about NGO competition in their area. Without any prompting from my questions, they confirmed Ajit's SVS-centered perspective on how villagers choose to join with their NGO or a rival NGO working nearby.

> Ken: In your opinion, what do the villagers see as the difference between SVS and the other NGOs, such as Prayas?
>
> Arvind: Between both NGOs? This much I can say, Prayas does work, too. They have an education center, other things, but still I can say that in this *area* the people's belief in SVS is more.
>
> Ken: Why is that?
>
> Arvind: One is that from the point of view of the work, they believe more in SVS. (pauses to think for a moment) Another is that we don't work from any selfishness. On the other hand, Prayas has been working on projects that are just for their own benefit. In order to *highlight* their own work, they have held meetings with this hidden agenda. And slowly, over time, people have left that organization. They don't believe in them now. Because they told so many lies, and the good people can see that, with time the truth comes out. So, trust in them is very little.
>
> Any yet, until now, SVS has never said to the people, don't join with those people. We never said that.
>
> Pushpa: Prayas people are saying that, "Don't join with SVS people." We never said that, but Prayas will say that, "Stay away from SVS, and join with us."
>
> Ken: So, people trust in SVS more?
>
> Arvind: People believe in SVS! One thing is that SVS is a big NGO, while Prayas only works in this area. And the people have been told very well that SVS is a big NGO, and we can do different kinds of development work. And SVS works only with the people's participation.
>
> Prayas does not do any big development projects, such as *lift irrigation* work, Prayas has never done that. So, people believe that we are a big

> NGO, and we will be able to work with the people for a long time. (local meaning of sustainability for workers)
>
> Pushpa: Prayas is very small.
>
> Arvind: Another thing. With Prayas people, those people who until just recently did not have a vehicle, who did not have a house, those people suddenly have vehicles. Those who did not have a house, their house has been built. So, people watch these things carefully. Because those people are from here. People will ask, "Where did all this come from?" If they aren't doing anything strange or wrong, then how did they get this? They are working for themselves, that's what people see.
>
> At SVS, people know that apart from the monthly pay, the workers don't get anything. If there is a vehicle, it belongs to the NGO, not the person. Those people (Prayas) take the vehicle home. We don't take the vehicles home. They stay at the office.

Arvind implicated the competing NGO, Prayas, in possibly corrupt practices. When competing for villagers' loyalties, trust and openness are the critical factors, and Prayas reportedly lost the trust of villagers in that area because of an apparent lack of transparency in their financial dealings. On the other hand, I learned from people outside of SVS that Prayas is known for doing excellent awareness-building activities in the area and that some "enlightened leaders" of the area continue to support their work. Implicit in Arvind's comments was also the idealized notion that NGO workers should not directly profit from their activities with poor people. The social worker's ideal of self-sacrifice for those less fortunate seemed to hold sway in the speech of these local level SVS employees. This sentiment was echoed by, or perhaps originated from, the SVS senior managers, who may have tried to keep their expenses and payrolls

in check by also playing up the emotional benefits accruing to staff because of the satisfying nature of their work in villages rather than the lack of economic benefits from working with the NGO.

Dr. Sharma, Arvind, Pushpa, Taussif, and Ajit shared some common concerns and perspectives on their choices to work in the NGO sector. An idealistic desire to help impoverished communities and the opportunity to "join with villagers" in bringing about greater awareness and social change were fundamental to their reasons for working with SVS. At the same time, except for Dr. Sharma who retired after decades with the government service and a full pension, all of the workers I met all expressed very practical, "bread and butter" reasons as their primary impetus to join the NGO.

"Outsiders" Come to the Village: SVS Perspectives on Donor Visits

From many people I met working in many NGOs in and around Udaipur, I heard regular comments on the people who represented the "lifeblood" (if not the "backbone") of these organizations – the donors. I found, however, that there was a relatively small range of perspectives on these "outsiders." The primary differences between their perspectives was mostly related to the amount of direct contact the individuals at the NGO had with the donor representatives. The top managers at SVS obviously had a more complex picture of the donors due to their frequent communications than the village-based project staff, such as Arvind and

Pushpa. In this section, however, I have chosen to focus on the perspectives of SVS staff working in villages on donor representatives who occasionally visited their village field areas in order to evaluate and monitor the progress of local projects.

I was curious to understand how local staff working in NGOs generally viewed foreign aid. On this, Ajit again provided some interesting insights.

> Ajit: If you look at the international picture, you will see that *foreign aid* is not the only thing. India is doing it, too. You have to give help to get help. If you saw the news the other day, you would have seen that in this country for the Indira Gandhi Memorial hospital, the Central Government gave more than seventeen lakhs (about US$ 53,000 in 1995). So, there is also this feeling that we will do the work ourselves. So, some places in the country we are helping, some places we are getting help. It's been like that since the beginning.
>
> Suresh: The villagers cannot come up with the money for a *large scale* project. They can't do it. They don't have the *resource*.
>
> Ajit: If you don't have international aid, then you get it from the Indian Government. Some NGOs say they won't take *foreign aid*, but they have a lot of aid from the Indian Government. And where does India get the aid? India doesn't have so much money that it can give ten million rupees to each NGO. Like in the Lok Jhumbish (a state-sponsored education project) project, where does the money come from? Today Wasteland Development project is going on, where does that money come from? This has all come from NADA (North American Development Alliance) and given to the government.
>
> So, whether you grab your ears from this side or from that side, it's all the same.[7] Whether the money comes from the Indian Government or NADA, it's all the same money.

[7] *Kaan pakadna* means to "grab one's ears," which is a traditional North Indian gesture indicating that one is sorry or ashamed.

Ajit expressed what seemed to be some defensiveness regarding international funding of development projects, and he was eager to point out that not all of the aid comes from foreign sources. The Indian government was also a primary donor. As he explored the issue further, however, he also criticized the self-congratulatory attitude of some NGOs that refused to accept foreign monies to fund their development projects. In the end, he allowed that the money had to come from outside the country, since India itself does not have the "resource" to fund the multitude of projects required to tackle issues of poverty throughout the nation. When he stated, "Whether you grab your ears from this side or from that side, it's all the same," he expressed his view, however, that this remained a potential source of shame for India. The shame apparently stemmed from the inability to identiy sufficient financial resources within India to fund development work in impoverished areas. This is a perspective that I never heard voiced by any of the top managers or consultants that interface most frequently with donor agencies.

On the monitoring and evaluation visits by foreigners, such as the "Big Meeting," Ajit and Suresh from the SVS Jhilaasanaa Block Office shared the following observations:

> Ken: What do you think about all the funding agency people who come out here to Jhilaasanaa Block to see your work? Do different people keep coming, or do the same people ever come back?
>
> Ajit: There are very few people who come twice, otherwise people don't do *double* or *repeat* visits here. They come once, then they don't ever

come again. I have been here more than six years, and I have seen this very rarely here at SVS.

What exactly are you asking?

Ken: How long do they stay then?

Suresh: He is asking if these foreigners come to see the work.

Ambalal (my research assistant): We are wondering what you think about these people who come. What is your perspective on them?

Ajit (speaking directly to me): You mean, how long do they stay?

Ken: Yes.

Ajit: Well, if someone comes for a long *study*, then they stay for one week. And they stay in the *field*, at the zone office or someone's house. Most people come for a day, maybe two days, never more than two weeks.

Ken: Do you think this is long enough to understand what is happening in the village with the work?

Ajit. No. It takes a long time understand. Like you have come here several times now, and then you speak with me, with the zonal workers, with the villagers, and slowly you begin to understand what is happening. Going to meet someone one time, to see the work once, things don't appear clear.

And another thing, when people come from far away, foreigners, to see what is happening here, we like it. The work that is going on in the villages, the groups that we have built up, the meetings we hold, when someone comes from outside we are happy about all that we have been able to accomplish. And when they go from here, they will sometimes give us some suggestions before they go. We learn something new about what is our *fault*, what could we improve. We like it when they do this.

But, as it usually happens, they come here and go again very quickly, and we never have any idea what their *view* on the work is. They will have some meetings about it all at the *Udaipur level*, or they will meet the top managers, but what they say never reaches us out here.

Ken: When foreign visitors come, do they come and stay in one village?

Ajit: There is no real *sense* to come and stay in just one village. Usually what happens is that they come in the morning for a *fixed* time, say from ten to two in the afternoon. So, they come for a couple of hours, we take them to one village, whatever special program they want to see, such as *Women's Development*, they go to see a program. *Bas*[8], having seen that program, they just go back again. There are people coming like that, some others coming for one full day, but altogether most don't stay very long. As long as you have been here, no one has ever stayed here so long before.

According to Ajit and others I met at SVS, the visitors rarely stayed more than one day, or even an afternoon. This was clearly not a sufficient amount of time to understand what they were witnessing, especially when visiting villages for the first time. Nevertheless, these often highly paid consultants and donor agency representatives were called upon to make clear and insightful recommendations to the donor agency decision-makers back at their main offices based on their visits. In my conversation the with Dr. Narayan of NADA, she said of these independent consultants, "They feel that four weeks (the total time the consultant will be in India, moving from one NGO to another spending just one or two days at each) is a long time. For them it's long time, but for somebody here four weeks is too short to know what's happening." Four weeks away from one's family back in North America, for instance, is a long time, but it would never be long enough to understand how village dynamics worked in rural

[8] *Bas* is a commonly spoken interjection meaning, "That's it," or "No more." As in this case when Ajit says *"bas,"* it has an emphatic sense that gives the listener an idea that there really is not any more to say on the subject.

Rajasthan and how their agency's development projects were affected by these local realities.

According to Ajit, the most useful contribution that donor agency representatives could make to improve their work in the field (beyond giving money and leaving them alone) would be to make active suggestions based on their observations about how the work might be improved. Ajit did not suggest that he believed the foreigners who come would necessarily be informed enough and able to provide the kinds of insights that he would like to hear from them, but he did want to at least give them the benefit of the doubt that they should be able to do this.

On the other hand, given her close perspective on foreign donors as a member of the Indian donor community herself, Dr. Narayan was clearly fed up with foreign international development consultants coming to India, stating that "when they come out with things like in Guatemala this happened, this happened in Latin America, in South Africa it happened. It's not true in India! Even what happens in Bangladesh and Indonesia is not true of India." This may help to explain why few foreigners have any concrete suggestions to give Ajit and his colleagues about their work. According to Dr. Narayan, very few foreign visitors would actually understand what they were observing well enough to formulate recommendations on the spot to provide him with immediate feedback.

On the issue of feedback, Ajit said further, "They will have some meetings about it all at the *Udaipur level*, or they will meet the top managers, but what they say never reaches us out here." This seemed to be a common complaint among the staff working at the block and zone level offices. When I asked Arvind and Pushpa the same question, I received the following reply:

> Arvind: In front of us they say they are satisfied. When they go, I don't know what they say.
>
> Ken: Do they give you any suggestions about the work?
>
> Arvind: No. They don't give any suggestions for our work. They just ask about the work, chat for a while and go back. They don't really share much about what they think.

The idea that there could be a more significant conversation about their efforts somewhere else, like back at the SVS office after a donor field visit, resounded in many discussions with people working in the villages. From my observations, however, the discussions back at the headquarters were usually just brief summarizations of the day's events -- where they went, whom they met. Only in the single case where the donor representative had visited the same NGO more than once, and even went to the same village several times over a couple of years, did I see very meaningful discussions at the headquarters level about their work in the field. The woman, a donor representative from a northern European aid agency, was also the one donor who was much more likely to proffer comments and suggestions directly to the workers in the villages, as Ajit wished would happen more often. Given her regular visits, her perspective would have

been much richer and more valuable for the SVS workers and managers than the insights by most donors, as well.

One of the most surprising impressions reiterated by both Ajit and Arvind to me was the idea that, although language was clearly a barrier to speaking with villagers and many block and zone level workers, they believed that the foreigners could make out the actual meaning of a villager's comments by reading his or her countenance. On the issue of communication and translation between foreign visitors and local villagers, Ajit and Suresh said:

> Suresh: They ask questions directly from the villagers. When *visitors* come from outside, they ask directly from the villagers, like, "Is SVS doing work here? Is this health project going on here? What do you think about it?" They speak English, and someone with them will translate into Hindi. So, the villagers give their answers, and the person speaks it to the visitor in English. So, they understand. And if there is some mistake, when they are about to leave, they say, "This work happened like this (bad), whereas before it was good." So, when they come, they can see very well what is happening here.
>
> Ajit: So, when they come, they see, and we tell them, "We did this, we did that." We introduce them to some people. They speak in English to the people, but the people don't speak English, so someone from our office stays with them. So, what they say in English, someone will *translate* into Hindi for them. What the people say in Hindi is translated into English.
>
> Ken: So, usually the visitors don't speak Hindi?
>
> Ajit: Mostly they do not speak Hindi. But the people who come to *assess* the work, to get some idea, those people are very *sharp*. Just by looking at the face of a villager, by seeing the *expression*, they can figure out what the man really wanted to say. I have spoken with a couple of those guys, and they said, "It might be like this, he may mean this." And they were absolutely right. Seeing that villager's face, they were able to figure out

what they meant. So, in this way, even without speaking they can understand a lot.

Ken: It is interesting that even though these people's culture is so different, you still see that they are able to understand what the villagers intend to say but don't say directly.

Ajit: Yeah, but if there is some discussion going on, the foreigners will have absolutely no idea where the conversation is going, what it is about. When there are a lot of people talking together, they cannot *assess* what is happening, but in a *particular* conversation (one on one), they can *assess* the way that person is speaking even if they don't know what they are speaking.

Similarly, Arvind had the following comments on the same issue:

Ken: When funding agency people come, what happens?

Arvind: The *donor* should see where is the work going on, where is it not going on, how is it going, they should ask about this. For instance, if someone comes to SVS work, just take our own organization as the example, they should not just trust our word about how the work is going. Whatever the villagers say, they should trust in that. Those people will tell the truth about what is happening in the village. We (SVS) can also tell lies! We can say that everything is great. But the villagers will not tell such lies.

Ken: How often do donor people come here?

Arvind: They keep coming. I have taken donor people to the villages two or three times myself.

Ken: Do you think that these people can really understand how the work is going?

Arvind: If they don't understand, then they ask again three times. Imagine that they have gone to some village, and if a villager is telling them something different, and if in between the translation is not true, if it doesn't match what the villager is really saying, then the donors can still that villager's behavior. *Matlab*, they can see from the face what that

> villager is really saying. Though I can't really say just how much of the reality they see. I don't know that.

Arvind remained more skeptical than Ajit as to whether the foreign visitors actually understood what they seeing and hearing. Nevertheless, they both expressed their belief that the foreigners "are very *sharp*. Just by looking at the face of a villager, by seeing their *expression*, they can figure out what the man really wanted to say." Although Dr. Narayan did not comment directly on this perceived ability of foreign consultants to "see from the face what that villager is really saying," I imagine that she would have likely disagreed with their assessment, at least as a generalization.

All in all, I found that most village, zone, and block level staff at SVS were willing to assume that their foreign visitors were generally talented, qualified, and insightful. The donors just rarely exhibited these qualities in front of them in during the field visits. Then again, being a foreigner myself, perhaps they were just being polite in their comments.

The End of Shanti-Baaii's Performance

With the exception of Taussif, all of the people interviewed in this chapter were present at the "Big Meeting" in Leelapur. In fact, Taussif also arrived at the Jhilaasanaa Block Office later that day on unrelated work. Except for Dr. Sharma, who played the lead role in the planning and execution of that day, all of the others whose comments are represented here, Ajit, Arvind, Suresh, and Pushpa, remained as background characters at the "Big Meeting." However, they

each played critical roles in the design and framing of the set for that all-important meeting. Ajit was the main point of contact between Udaipur and the Block Office from where all of the activities were coordinated. Because of this, Ms. Clark and Dr. Whitcomb interviewed him briefly later in the day back at the Block Office about his role in the SVS health education activities.

Arvind and Pushpa were the main messengers who went from house to house in the Sulaawaas-BaNaawaT-Leelapur area to invite the villagers, especially the women, to come. Arvind, somewhat proudly, described his success at getting people to come to programs for which, as we saw in chapter two, they did not know the purpose. He and Pushpa explained:

> Arvind: We don't hide anything from anyone. You know, the *thakur*[9] at Leelapur, or the *mukhiya*[10] at BaNaawaT, even in other villages, the traditional chiefs who are still there, and even the new ones (elected in the Panchayati Raj local government), most of them believe in SVS. And when we call people to come for a program, everyone will come. We don't give anything for them to come. Yet, from every household they come.
>
> Ken: What about the village women? What do they think about coming to these NGO programs?
>
> Arvind: When we call women for a program or a meeting…
>
> Pushpa: It is difficult to get them to come. The kind of awareness that we want to see in the women, we have not seen that until now. When we call them for a program, they keep on saying, "I have too much work here. I cannot go there." We ask them to just take a little time to come for these programs. But it is difficult.

[9] *Thakur* is the traditional high-caste leader of caste-based villages in rural Rajasthan.
[10] *Mukhiya* is the traditional "chief" in adi-vasi (tribal) villages in rural Rajasthan.

Arvind's initial description of the SVS contacts with the local elite, traditional and elected leaders of his zone, suggested that getting villagers to attend these types of meetings was more like tapping into the traditional rural Indian "vote banks."[11] His insistence that they "do not give anything for them to come" did not seem to include the long-term implications of choosing *not* to attend such meetings where the fortunes of SVS, and by association, its allies among the village power elite are at stake.

Usually related to questions of power struggles between traditionally feuding communities, violence in the villages of that area was still commonplace. In this particular community, the traditionally feuding communities have also allied themselves alternately either with SVS or Prayas. Hence, the notion that the villagers did not receive payment in cash for attending these functions was perhaps less pertinent than the implicit threat, perceived or actual, that some benefit might be withheld from them in the future or face other consequences for choosing not to come. SVS did not, in my experience, in any way support such implicit threats for getting people to "join" their programs and projects. On the other hand, I also heard from other sources living in that area that the threats and alliances that did exist continued to be drawn along NGO lines.

The challenge of getting women to come to such meetings was especially acute, according to Pushpa, because as she says, they feel that "I have too much work here. I cannot go there." This was clearly an issue that all NGOs working

[11] "Vote banks" refer to "blocks" of voters in rural Indian contexts where certain caste or tribal communities tend to be controlled by local elites and leaders who make agreements, usually for their own benefit, in return for which they commit the votes of their respective "block" of village voters.

in the area continually faced. She said of women's development in the area, generally, that "Slowly, they are joining. But as much development as we would like to see, that does not happen. It will be a long time before they will join easily." Pushpa suggested, in a sense, that the "post-awakening consciousness" was not strong in many of these village women. Nevertheless, at least forty women from nearby villages, many with young babies in their arms, finally attended the "Big Meeting" at Leelapur. Given that most of them did not know why they were going for the meeting, that was indeed an impressive testimony to the feat that Pushpa and Arvind managed to arrange behind the scenes before the meeting.

Shanti-Baaii's description of how she administered prenatal health care, deliveries, post-natal and family planning counseling to the women in her area remained the focal point of the meeting for nearly forty-five minutes. Her final comments are documented here:

*Language key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Shantii-Bai (taking out a small plastic box and three small dolls from her family planning kit): ***This is a house.*** (taking one doll in her hand) ***There is one child of one year. One baby…***

Dr. Joshi (a former senior Government doctor who recently joined the SVS Health Unit): *One child in the house.*

Dr. Sharma : *One child to a family, that is tolerable. It will be looked after.*
Shantii-Bai: ***This child is going around, playing so much…***
Dr. Sharma : *The child is playing in the house and very happy! He is being looked after very nicely.*

Shantii-Bai: ***And the food and drinking is fine. It's really happy! After a little while, another baby comes.***
Dr. Joshi: *Another child.*
Shantii-Bai: ***Now there are two children.***
Dr. Sharma: *Two children are tolerable.*
Shantii-Bai: ***There is plenty of room for two children to play. But there needs to be a space between the two.***
Dr. Sharma: *But there should be a spacing.*
Shantii-Bai: ***If there is a space between the two, and there are two children then everything will be fine in the house. They can play, eat, they will be fed, they can play. And then one more child comes.***
Dr. Joshi: *Third child.*
Shantii-Bai: ***Now there are three children, and that is fine. That is fine, but when there were two children it was better. Three children, that is ok, but not so much as two. Then if another child comes…***
Dr. Sharma: **One minute, one minute**. *She says that one child that was very happy. But second child came, and of course they tolerated and both of them they were happy. Now the third child has come. Of course, that delivery was normal, everything was all right, the third child has come. Now it is difficult for them. Because now the three children they are, na. And she says that between the two there should be a spacing. That is three years spacing is a must, then it is all right. But if spacing is not there, one after another the childs are coming, then it is difficult. And when the third child is there, it will be very difficult for them! And if this is a family, and their house to live, that child will not be doing very well.* (to Shantii-Bai) **Ok, now tell what next.**
Shantii-Bai: ***Now there are three children, if a fourth one comes, …***
Dr. Joshi: *Fourth one.*
Shantii-Bai: ***now there will be no space in the house. Now for the mother there will be a problem to give them milk. She will not be able to give enough to the other children …***
Dr. Sharma: *Actually, now she is saying that it will be very difficult for the mother in that uplifting, I mean, uh,* **how do you say it, raising the child?**
Dr. Jain: *Bringing up…*
Dr. Sharma: *Bringing up the children!*
Dr. Drumm: *Raising, raising the child…*
Dr. Sharma (to Shantii-Bai in a low voice): **Ok, what will happen with three children? Leave aside the fourth one now. What will happen with three children? Won't one of the children face some difficulty? Tell them, what will happen?**

Shantii-Bai: ***Now there may more poverty for them, there may be a shortage of space in the house, all this can happen, meaning, like this …***

Dr. Sharma: *Actually, she says that because of the poverty, she cannot feed all the three children. And with the result that, uh…*(to Shanti-Baaii again) **What will happen then?**

Dr. Joshi: *They are not educated.* (snorting slightly as he says this)

Dr. Sharma (to Shanti-Baaii again): **What will happen then? If she cannot give milk to the third one, won't there be a problem?**

Dr. Drumm (very quietly, to his two American colleagues) : *There may be a problem with dowry with so many children.*

Jaffer-jii (Dr. Sharma's long-time assistant suddenly begins answering the question for Shanti-Baaii, as though he may be getting impatient with her answers that are not exactly what Dr. Sharma is looking for): *Like if there is one family, one **baby**, one child, two child, and three child, not enter.*

Ms. Clark (the American health care specialist): *Not entirely there!* (smiling) *I can see*. (Everyone now realizes that what Jaffer-jii means is that there will not be enough milk for all the children if they do not space them out.)

Dr. Sharma (to Jaffer-jii): **That's fine, she already said all that.** (to the American visitors) *But when it will try to enter, then it will be a problem.*

Dr. Joshi (his voice booming over all the others): *That third child is to be adjusted, and it will be adjusted!*

Dr. Jain (in a much quieter voice, but with much greater clarity for the visitors): *It will be a burden on her.*

Dr. Sharma: *There will be the, uh,*

Dr. Drumm (in a rather serious tone compared with others laughing): *Damage.*

Dr. Sharma: *one mid-wife, and…*

Jaffer-jii (continuing now to show what is in Shanti-Baaii's family planning kit): So, use the spacing, and condom, oral pills…

As this discussion at the "Big Meeting" was beginning to wrap up, several remarkable indicators of the orientations of those present emerged. Shanti-Baaii's description of how she advised women to "space" their children by at least three

years was regularly interrupted by the abrupt translations and interjections in English of Dr. Joshi, SVS's recently hired former senior government doctor and health director for Udaipur District. His side comment, "They are not educated," seemed remarkably out of context and even offensive as Shanti-Baaii otherwise clearly and methodically described the advising process. Like a patient father, Dr. Sharma directed Shanti-Baaii in Hindi toward the descriptions of her work that he would like the NADA visitors to understand. Meanwhile, Dr. Drumm suggested to his North American colleagues that there might be a problem of dowry with so many children. His comment belied the fact that he understood little of Adi-Vasi traditions, as dowry is not an issue for most of the women that Shanti-Baaii would advise. In Bhil communities, relations between men and women generally tend to be more equal than in traditional Indian caste society.

At this point, Jaffer-jii, Dr. Sharma's long-time assistant and peer of Ajit, suddenly took over the discussion from Shanti-Baaii, apparently ascertaining that the foreign visitors had not been able to follow her description. Dr. Sharma initially tried to quiet his assistant and let Shanti-Baaii speak further, but when he realized that for the first time in nearly half an hour the North American visitors were beginning to respond to the information they were receiving, he also decided to let Jaffer-jii continue. Meanwhile, Dr. Jain, the quiet and perceptive "lady doctor" seated next to Ms. Clark and Dr. Whitcomb offered some of the most useful, concise and polite comments for the foreigners.

Quite remarkably, Dr. Narayan did not utter another word from the last forty minutes of the presentation until after the meeting was over. She was the one representative among the "outsiders" that day who understood almost everything happening in that interaction. In the next chapter, we learn more about her perspective on this interaction, along with her view and other donors' views of development and NGOs, more generally.

CHAPTER 5: PERSPECTIVES FROM THE DONORS

In a final turn toward closing a loop on the communication stream between villagers, NGO workers and donor representatives, we look here first at some of the perspectives and aspirations that donor representatives brought to the "Big Meeting." What we can see from the discussions with the professionals interviewed here is a wide range of motivations and perspectives on development processes and communication with their counterparts in NGOs and in the village communities where the projects are based. Similar to Georgia Kaufmann's interviews with the Britain-based development professionals about the "reasons that led developers as individuals into the development process, and the motives and ideas that guide their professional lives" (1997: 108), my questioning of development professionals centered mostly on personal perspectives and the experiences that contributed to the formation of their views on development and their participation in its processes. From my conversations with Delhi-based "developers," as Kaufmann terms them, I found that the perspectives were primarily affected by, on the one hand, their capacity to intimately understand what they see "in the field" (i.e. villagers' perspectives on village life) or, on the other hand, their relative distance from that understanding, ranging so far as to locate the "other" (Said:1978) in a "remote village" as *exotic*. Indications that an experience was perceived as "exotic" emerge from comments such as anthropologist Laurie Whitcomb's remark upon arriving in Leelapur, "Wow! We're really here!"

Not surprisingly, among these donor agency-based development professionals, the project administrators from Delhi, Mumbai or the other "metrocentres" of India, especially those administrators who are also Indian, generally best understand their experiences and interactions in rural villages. Based in Delhi for several years prior to our discussion, Dr. Narayan, who accompanied her foreign colleagues to Leelapur for the "Big Meeting," is one such professional whom I interviewed.

DR. NARAYAN: "THE INDIAN ON THE TEAM"

Dr. Narayan was the program manager for the project providing funds for the SVS maternal health project in Jhilaasanaa Block. When I met her at the NADA India headquarters in Delhi one month after the "Big Meeting," she suggested that we could have our discussion in the cafeteria, away from her office and colleagues. I quickly realized that she was interested to tell me things that might not be popular with some of her bosses or colleagues. I have not included those comments here out of respect for her confidentiality, but what I learned from my conversation with her that afternoon formed the basis for my growing understanding of how international development operates at bureaucratic levels and how that translates, or not, to the field level of organizations such as SVS.

As with the other informants at the NGO and village levels, I first asked her about how she came to work in international development and what her motivations were in the beginning.

> Dr. Narayan: My husband was working in a development agency in Rajasthan. I worked with various doctors and hospitals, including a three-

month stint at a Block Health Referral Center. But I was disgusted with the way people were operating there. You know, I'd say to the medical officers there that we have to go for a field trip, and they'd say there is no petrol because somebody took the petrol for something. The BDO (Block Development Officer) took petrol from the jeep for his own personal use. And the doctors were charging money from the patients on the side, you know.

Anyway, after that, I went out with my husband to a village, and he said, "Why don't you do something about health here?" And there were a lot of kids hanging around, a lot of malnutrition, you know. I saw a baby with diarrhea, a baby girl who is going to die obviously in two to three hours because she was really so bad. And the only thing I knew, frankly, was curative medicine, so I said I would like to set up health camps.

So, I used to go four times a month and spend three or four days there. I set up health camps, and it was very frustrating because I didn't want to give injections, but the community's perception of treatment was getting injections. So nobody would come to my camps, and I'd sit all day, you know.

I had no idea, no inkling about what development was all about. I mean, I come from an urban fairly well-off family with a business background. I am the first professional in my family to go to medical school, and we know that people do social work, but that's like more of a fad or eccentric people do it. It's not what regular people do. Regular people have jobs.

So, when I met my husband, it was an arranged marriage. And I married him because everything else was nice, and I mean what work he is doing. I thought, "Ok, he is doing something in development." But the whole thing of development did not strike me. "Yeah, he is doing good things for poor, but he is educated." To a middle-class Indian girl coming from a conservative family, that's pretty important because you know you have the academic qualifications. Your husband doesn't make money, but I am a doctor and I'll make money, as well.

But only when I started going to villages with him the reality of it began sinking in. So, then we set up these health camps.

Dr. Narayan's background as an "urban, middle-class Indian girl coming from a conservative family" provided her with a perspective on development that I frequently encountered in middle-class circles in Udaipur, Delhi, and other Indian cities I visited during my research. Her comment that her husband did "something in development, …doing good things for poor, but he is educated" articulated a common set of priorities for the majority of millions of urban, middle-class Indians throughout the country. Education, a good job, and stable income are the main priorities for young men and women looking to marry, as well as for parents regarding their sons and, increasingly, their daughters entering the workplace. Dr. Narayan's initial encounters with the extreme poverty and instability of many people in rural Rajasthan, underscored by experiences such as seeing a baby girl about to die from a preventable affliction such as diarrhea, changed her professional direction. Her experiences also taught her early on that the state-controlled resources for these impoverished rural people were often ineffective in providing relief or assistance to them due countervailing efforts including misappropriation and corruption by officers in charge. As a result, she gravitated toward the domain of her husband's profession – the NGO sector.

Frustration with the status quo coupled with a strong desire to "make a difference" were common themes in the personal histories of many of the development professionals I met during my interviews in Delhi and Mumbai. I also heard these sentiments echoed by many young development professionals working in their first jobs at NGOs such as SVS. But these inexperienced students did not often describe glaring personal examples of injustice and

deprivation, such as dying babies and under-the-table payments for treatment, recounted by more experienced professionals such as Dr. Narayan. According to her description, rather than choosing her path from any particular inspiration born of her middle-class upbringing, Dr. Narayan evolved into her role as a committed NGO professional through her unusually extensive rural experience that followed her marriage to a well-educated NGO "do-gooder."

When Dr. Narayan's husband took a sabbatical to go the US after two years of working in rural Rajasthan, she accompanied him and spent her time obtaining a Masters of Public Health from Harvard University. Soon after completing her degree, she went to work for a year at Johns Hopkins providing technical assistance to health-oriented NGOs in developing countries. Later, she and her husband returned to India, and she was hired as the program manager for the maternal health project for NADA:

> At the time, I jumped to the idea. One, it meant that I lived in Delhi, and two, it meant that, you know, we had an income. Because we are living in Delhi, and my husband just works for an NGO. NGO income is not enough. We would not be able to, and I have a child, and my husband's parents are old and living with me, so it seemed like a good idea. Well, I always said in the US that I'd never work for a big aid agency, because it's like selling your soul to the devil.
>
> Because I had been working with some big aid agencies before, I used to think, "Why can't they leave us alone. We know what we are doing." But we had so many constraints. We had to get approvals for every single thing and we got accountable for every last file.
>
> But this project seemed good, and I am reporting to an Indian. I am not reporting directly to a North American.

Having worked on the NGO side of the funding equation for several years, Dr. Narayan came to view working with a 'big aid agency … like selling your soul to the devil." The main reason she cited for this points to the inherent power imbalance between the donor and the recipient organizations. Reporting always moves from the NGO to the funding agency, and the demands of that reporting are often the source of great frustrations for NGO managers and staff. Ultimately, however, she was willing to put aside her concerns at working on the wrong side of the international development equation, believing that it was in the best interest of her family to take the well-paying agency position.

Her concern with the balance of power apparently remained, however, as she pointed out, "I am reporting to an Indian (rather than) a North American." The differences between and among foreign aid agency professionals became more obvious to her once she agreed to work inside one of the largest agencies. Indians working within the donor agency were presumably more experienced in the day-to-day realities of rural Indian life than their expatriate colleagues, and the Indians tended to view many of their expatriate managers as powerful decision-makers who did not necessarily possess the depth of experience required to manage complex Indian development interventions. Becoming part of the aid agency team, she saw that distinctions between Indians and their expatriate managers were ever-present and hung like a cloud over their offices, which is why perhaps she preferred to hold our conversation in the loud cafeteria rather than in her quiet office.

This theme of modern office politics at a bi-lateral aid agency reflecting colonial realities from a previous generation emerged again later in our conversation:

> Dr. Narayan: I have a lot of North American friends, but I find that there is a tendency to a kind of neo-colonialism here. They think they know all the answers, and that's not true. Certainly not true.
>
> We have a few North Americans and a lot of Indians, and you can see that, in discussions and meetings, the policy is to listen to us, but it's obvious when the final product comes out, our suggestions are not important.
>
> But then again, what I talked about neo-colonialism could be individualistic because I believe that the person who was here before the present director was very open. He listened and would take their opinions very seriously. So it may just be a very personal thing.
>
> Ken: It always was, in a way. Colonialism always had individuals, too.
>
> Dr. Narayan: Yes, that's true. See, Ken, people who have spent time in India, I mean many people who come out as consultants have very good perspective of what should be done. They know at what point they should use judgment and at what point they should listen. Those consultants are really very good. We welcome them. And we have an enormous number of short-term consultants who really are a pain in the neck because they come here for a week and they go back with impressions that we don't know where they got them from. You know, it's wholly impressionistic, not based on reality, not based on discussions with people. And we go to so much trouble each time somebody comes from abroad like that. It is a big headache, but we make sure that they meet enough people, so that they get the right impression, and they go back and produce what we think is junk.

Dr. Narayan appeared from these comments to be struggling to find a clarifying principle regarding the involvement and participation of foreigners in Indian development processes. At first she states that she has "a lot of North

American friends," perhaps attempting to maintain impartiality on the subject of internal office politics. She went on, however, to describe the approach of foreign managers in her office as "neo-colonial," pointing to her observation that they tend "to think that they know all the answers," and in developing policy "our suggestions are not important." She described her criteria for being a "very good" foreign development professional as "people who have spent time in India" and who "know what point they should use judgment and what point they should listen." Interestingly, though, the foreign development professionals whom she believed were "really very good" were consultants who came to her office only on a project basis. She did not include any locally based, expatriate managers in her description of potentially "very good" foreigners in Indian development work. Like the British colonial administrative offices a century earlier, the dynamics at her aid agency belied clear distinctions between local and foreign (Western) employees. As though she suddenly remembered where we were sitting and what her official role should be, she immediately qualified her comments, suggesting "it might be very individualistic because the person who was here before … listened and would take their (Indian) opinions very seriously." So, she apparently believed that it was possible to be a "good" foreign development professional based in Delhi, but these people represented a remarkable minority among the foreigners.

This attitude toward her own international bi-lateral aid organization might have colored her approach to the work in the office and "in the field," such as the day we met at the "Big Meeting." Upon further examination of the

transcripts from that day, the most significant aspect of Dr. Narayan's participation in the "Big Meeting" was her remarkable lack of interaction with her foreign colleagues, the SVS team members or the *gariib log*. When she did comment, she often did so in order to prompt others to speak more, such as when she suggested to Dr. Sharma that he really should inform the villagers as to why her team of outsiders has asked them to gather in Leelapur that morning. She also never really let on that she understood the villagers and their experiences much more than her middle-class Delhi background and demeanor apparently led her hosts to presume. She resisted urges to translate the Mewari and Hindi language flying around her, perhaps because the SVS professionals in charge of "conducting" the interaction between villagers and the foreign consultants kept rushing to translate and interpret others' comments.

I did not have the opportunity to interview any of the foreign visitors at the "Big Meeting" because those present that day left India within one week of their visit to Leelapur. They completed their report on the reproductive health work of SVS in the Udaipur area and submitted it to Dr. Narayan just one week before my interview with Dr. Narayan at her office in Delhi. She did not offer to let me read their report, nor did I ask to read it, as she had already indicated to me that at that time it was still a sensitive document with potentially far-reaching implications for future funding of the SVS project. Nevertheless, she indicated through a collection of comments, some of which were nearly inaudible in the noisy cafeteria that she was not impressed with the report submitted by consultant Drs. Drumm and Whitcomb and Susan Clark. I surmised from her comments that she

tended to view her foreign charges that day as less near the group of outsiders she described as "really very good" and closer to the group of "short-term consultants who really are a pain in the neck because they come here for a week and they go back with impressions that we don't know where they got them from."

I was surprised to learn that "native" development professionals working closer to "the field" must often take on this role to orchestrate successful development tours for their foreign consultant guests, similar to the way SVS orchestrated the visit of all the NADA representatives to the Leelapur health project. Dr. Narayan stated, "we go to so much trouble each time somebody comes from abroad like that" in order to "make sure that they meet enough people, so that they get the right impression." These pre-planned performances of development realities "in the field" were central to convey complex realities to "outsiders" with presumably little or no experience of Rajasthan. While SVS professionals planned and managed the development encounter in Leelapur for NADA representatives, the local Indian NADA managers attempted to design and lead a successful visit for their foreign colleagues. These levels of orchestration and performance at the "Big Meeting" became clearer to me after my discussion with Dr. Narayan in Delhi that day.

This led me to wonder, "How could an outsider ever learn what is actually happening in a village-based project if interactions are so planned and managed by intervening NGO or aid professionals even within their own teams?" Drawing upon the experiences of one foreign project manager from another bi-

lateral funding agency based in Delhi, less controlled possibilities for engaging in donor agency-NGO-village interactions are outlined in the next section.

MARIA JOHANSSEN: SWEDISH AID DONOR

I met Maria Johanssen, a program manager for the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA), at her office in the Swedish Embassy at New Delhi after being referred to her by SVS managers in Udaipur. They told me that she is a "very good donor," and I should hear her perspective. As the conversation below suggested, I found Ms. Johanssen to be very open and self-reflective on her role as a donor and for the possibilities for donor-recipient relationships in development.

> Ken: How would you characterize your role with the NGOs?
>
> Maria: There's different parts to that role. I see myself more as a supporter. I don't want to be… because people, it has to come from within. And if I could support those tendencies or developments, I try to do that. And, you know, maybe you have a discussion, or try to be encouraging in certain areas. Things like that. But not being over-active, saying "This is good! We should do that." But saying, "Oh, this is interesting," that type of thing. So, in that sense, you know, not really active. I don't want to play an active role in their business, because it is their business.
>
> And, of course, then, I'm a donor, so I have to be aware of what they are doing, what they are doing with tax-payers' funds. I also see it more as a spider kind of thing. I try to support things, get things going in different angles, maybe connect people to each other.
>
> Ken: Has that been very successful, you think, in your experience in India?
>
> Maria: I don't think that I use it that much. I mean, not spider in a network, maybe not in that sense as being networking. If there is a need for that kind of thing, it will be there. I don't have to work for it, and I

> don't have the time to put so much work into it. I think it's good, but there's limitations to networking, too. More of a spider kind of thing, you know, see how things are going from this office. You know, see that nothing gets stuck. If nothing gets stuck, see that things are going smoothly. Try to push them, that "Hey, come one, give me the plan of action for this year now, not in two month's time." So that we don't stop the activities.
>
> Ken: A sort of facilitator.
>
> Maria: Mm-hmm.
>
> Ken: Yours is basically a supporting role to NGOs. You said that there are different roles that you see for yourself, that would be one, I guess, but you obviously have another role…
>
> Maria: As a donor. I mean, you would have, as I see it, the optimum is if you have a partnership, that you could talk as equals and all that. That's the optimum, and that is towards what I am striving. But then, reality is different. I'm the one who has the money in my bag, and they don't. So, there's always… It's always there, even if you don't want it to be there. I think it's there, anyway.

While the ideal situation may be a "partnership" of "equals," Ms. Johanssen acknowledged that equality can never emerge entirely when one party is a "donor" with resources and another party is a "recipient' in need of resources. The desire to establish partnerships, however, was an attitude prevalent among "developers" in the donor community. This desire was very much in keeping with the 1990s' popular development discourses of "participation," "process," and "empowerment," but attention to these social factors in development tended not to be viewed equally among various bi-lateral donor agencies. In his study of socio-cultural language and ideologies in official development documentation at several large aid agencies, Alan Rew found that "the one donor that had most

thoroughly incorporated socio-cultural factors was the Swedish Development Agency, whose evaluation reports showed a general tendency towards greater use of social, cultural and historical interpretation of development" (1997:93). My conversation with Ms. Johanssen reflected the same tendency toward a more self-reflective, critical view of development relations and communication than I found in most of my discussions with development donors. Commenting further on the power imbalance, she said:

> Ken: Do you think that affects the way they communicate with you, or the way you communicate with them?
>
> Maria: Yeah, yeah. I think it may. Maybe I'd be even more low-key because of that. Because my word… It's different between different NGOs also, it depends on how strong they are in themselves. If it's a little bit weak, and they aren't sure where they are going and all that, my word can weight very strongly, and I don't want it to do that. I mean, if I say, "Why don't you hire this person, and it might be good for you," and they actually do that. And everything you say, they actually do, then it's like "Oh-oh!" You know, things like that. So, it does make me even more aware of playing low-key.

"Playing low-key" and avoiding overtly controlling relationships in the planning and implementation decision-making of her recipient organizations was, again, not necessarily a value shared among other aid agencies. Rather, Dr. Narayan's description of the "neo-colonial" attitudes within her office may instead extend to organizational relationships with NGOs in the field. Some NGO professionals in Udaipur also suggested to me that they felt some donors were "really rude and insensitive, knowing nothing about Rajasthan or India."

As Kaufmann learned in her interviews with British aid professionals, through their involvement in development decision-making many of these "developers" come to comprehend the remarkably unbroken line between the colonial administrations and the current development agency administrations with their coterie of worldly professionals.[1] According to Rew, although many developers understand the complicated power dynamics between themselves and the NGO professionals, let alone the distance between themselves and project beneficiaries in a village, few of them would directly proclaim their understanding due to the political fallout that may ensue. On the other hand, one reason perhaps that the Swedish and other Scandinavian aid agencies do not have such strong tendencies toward avoiding discussion of power imbalances is that they do not have colonial histories of their own. North American, particularly US, aid agencies have to a great extent inherited the mantle of power once held by the European colonial powers, perhaps contributing to a tendency at their overseas development agency offices toward "neo-colonial" attitudes to "locals."

For her part, Ms. Johanssen suggested that she might adjust her communication style with recipient organizations due to her understanding of the inherent power imbalance in their relationships. Similarly, Rew also points out that individuals in the roles of "donating" large funds for development work tend to be aware of their potential impact on the individuals and communities where they are working:

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[1] "Talking of the civil service, Ms Mandarin suggested that following the transition from colonialism to aid, the civil service had inherited ex-colonial administrators and missionary types. These had gradually been replaced by technical staff over the years, who were mainly economists." (Kaufmann 1997:125)

> Social development practitioners, like any fieldworker, must tread warily and have regard to both power relations and sensitivities. They are often very aware the dangers of co-option, but have usually chosen to argue for change 'from within' and so find it difficult (but not impossible) to acknowledge publicly the full range of organizational debate and contests. (Rew 1997:87)

From my illuminating discussion with Maria Johanssen, I also learned about her various experiences visiting different recipient NGOs across India. While SVS provided my initial introduction to Ms. Johanssen, when commenting on the nature of her interactions with that NGO she intimated that there are alternative and, perhaps, better ways of structuring NGO-donor agency field visits:

> Ken: There seems to be a certain kind of expectation about the kind of interactions that you will have. Within that, do you feel that there are any constraints within that relationship or those expectations that they may have. Or is there anything commonly holding you back from learning what you would like to learn in those interactions?
>
> Maria: Yeah, there are. I mean, my expectations are, in some sense, different from some of theirs. SVS is one example. In getting fifty or a hundred people together in that meeting, it doesn't mean that I could have a relationship with them. It means that the bosses are sitting around the table, and people are saying what they are supposed to say. That, of course, is very illuminating for me about how the organization is working. I still get a lot of out it, but maybe not the thing that I wanted out of it from the beginning. So, of course, you have different ways of approaching all that.
>
> And to some extent, it can be frustrating, but I try to see it more as the way that the organizations are planning my trips and all that. It's very much a way of seeing how they are working. If they make sure that I meet most of the staff, and I can spend one morning with one staff going to a project, later with someone else going to another project, it means that they are quite confident in their organization, as such. Instead of going in a jeep

with the big bosses around, you know, just glancing at things. And I think that's quite different. I don't know if that's what you mean?

Ken: Yes, that's exactly what I'm wondering. If there are certain ways that tend work better for you getting to learn what you would like to learn from those interactions.

Maria: But learning what I like to learn is different, also. I like to learn more about the organization, as such, and this is a good way of learning about the organization. Like I said, at that meeting, it does say a lot. Then, of course, I want to see the activities, also. That's part of the thing. And, of course, if I go out in a jeep with four officials, it's very difficult for me to get an answer from the people in the villages, which are not overly positive. And, you know, things that are… So, that could also affect my view. And that is more difficult to go through. Because, I mean, it does say about their relationship with the villagers, but it's more difficult for me to see what is actually happening. I mean, in the organization, to see what is actually happening, by the way of treating me and organizing such types of meetings. But it's more difficult for me to see what's happening in the field, if it's like this.

Again, Ms. Johanssen's priorities and perspectives on development interactions reflected her particular attention to power dynamics and might not be typical of most bi-lateral aid agencies. Her social welfare background probably also made her more attuned to such issues than many of the economists and other technical professionals in charge of the majority of international development projects tend to be. On the other hand, development professionals with extensive experience working in villages, like Dr. Narayan and Ms. Johanssen, were more likely to see more signposts indicating the nature of relationships between NGO staff and villagers than other "outsiders" with less experience, such as the North American consultants at the "Big Meeting" in Leelapur.

Ms. Johanssen saw the SVS approach to orchestrating and controlling these donor agency meetings as less productive than differing approaches she had encountered at other NGOs. Dr. Narayan did not state directly that she found the SVS-organized "Big Meeting" less productive than others in which she had participated. Viewing her tendency, however, to remain silent during the meeting along with her implied and direct comments about the report generated by the North American consultants, one can imagine that she would have also agreed with Ms. Johanssen's assessment of the SVS approach to managing donor-NGO-village interactions. As Ms. Joahanssen stated earlier, the way that NGO managers choose to organize and manage these meetings told her a lot about an NGO's level of confidence and satisfaction with its own performance. As she said, "It's different between different NGOs also, it depends on how strong they are in themselves." Accordingly, based on her experience "in the field," Ms. Johanssen outlined an alternative approach to such meetings that she favored:

> Ken: Is there any other option to this that you have seen?
>
> Maria: With NGOs? Yeah, it's totally different with the different NGOs. Some of them, when you go out to a village, you go out to interview them, and they just continue with their everyday work, and if there is a meeting, I come along. They just introduce me as a friend, and I have come to learn about their activities. People say I work with other NGOs in other areas, and I am very interested in what they are doing.
>
> Ken: But they don't identify you as a donor?
>
> Maria: No, they might not even know that I am a donor.
>
> Ken: So, at the top level, somebody decides they are not going to introduce you that way.

Maria: Yes, that's part of the organizational approach to the work.

Given my own experience working with various NGOs in southern Rajasthan, I found this approach to the inherently power-laden donor-NGO-village development interaction very refreshing and unusual. On further reflection, however, it also seemed to me quite sensible and productive to represent foreign donor visitors in a village less as powerful benefactors from far away and more as "friends" who are interested to learn about their activities. Even if villagers came to learn that the visitor had a potentially greater role to them and their lives than just a "friend" of the local NGO staff member, I doubt that most villagers would feel upset about the misrepresentation of the visitor's purpose and intentions for the visit. In my own experience in BaNaawaT and Leelapur and as mentioned in chapter three in my interview with Heeralaal, many villagers understood that foreigners, including most visitors from urban India, could and probably would contribute something to the welfare of the village. That expectation was not likely, in any case, to become entirely supplanted in an introduction by an NGO staff member of a foreign visitor to them as "just a friend." But this approach would indicate a desire, however imperfect or incomplete in its potential, to actually minimize the perceived distance between donor representatives and *gariib log*.

The SVS approach demonstrated at the "Big Meeting" was apparently at the opposite end of the spectrum of development interactions. It resembled much more closely the former interactions of the British Resident administrators who would occasionally visit villages across Udaipur District in order to collect local

taxes and oversee minor disagreements, such as land claims (Sharma 1994). Having organized a show of solidarity with its organization by getting as many villagers to appear for the meeting as possible, a task made somewhat simpler by virtue of the fact that it occurred in the dead of summer when no agricultural activities could compete for the attention of villagers that day, SVS professionals then chose to underscore power differentials between the outsiders and the villagers in the way that the meeting was conducted. In fact, I heard many examples of similar behavior regarding SVS, in which clear hierarchies were mapped out even in the seating arrangements of SVS planning and reporting meetings between local professionals, staff, and villagers. When donor representatives were present, another layer of hierarchy was added to the mix, as witnessed that hot summer morning in Leelapur. I am not sure that SVS, with its own highly hierarchical structure, could easily or perhaps even desirably design donor visits along the lines of Maria's suggested method above. When looking at the vast cultural differences between Swedes and Indians, one sees opposing tendencies and ideals of viewing one another as equals (as with Swedes) or viewing others respectfully and correctly within traditional hierarchies related to one's position in society (as with Indians). SVS was clearly operating from an Indian hierarchical model of professional interaction, whereas Maria preferred her native approach to professional interactions that downplays hierarchy and differences.

In the case of the North Americans and the Indian (Dr. Narayan) in Leelapur, the distance between the villagers' perspectives on the meeting and the

foreigners' relative unease at finding themselves in such an "exotic" situation was so pronounced that the order and direction provided by SVS mediators and managers to the interactions may have also facilitated the "outsiders" goals to rapidly assess the local health project. But Dr. Narayan questioned if this whole approach to evaluating and assessing rural development projects was truly effective in the end. According to her, the reports generated by foreign consultants on such visits often tended toward inutility or even, in some cases, dangerous misdirection. Whereas Ms. Johanssen was based in Delhi for several years, the consultants stayed in India for less than one month, with little previous experience of the region.[2] Since she stayed long enough to become more involved in Indian culture and society, her insights and sensitivities in the approach to her work were obviously more profound than those of short-term visitors. Her attitude toward learning more about the world in which she works was exemplified by her desire to learn Hindi, as well:

> Ken: How do you find that experience when you go into a village? Have you learned some Hindi?
>
> Maria: I have learned some Hindi.
>
> Ken: How did you learn that?
>
> Maria: Yeah, partly during my trips. That's where I practice, and then by a tutor here.
>
> Ken: Is the tutor arranged by your organization?
>
> Maria: No, it's arranged by me.

[2] The one exception to this statement was Dr. Drumm, who had lived in Delhi for two years several years earlier, though he did not venture into "the field" very often for work during his stay.

Ken: Do they encourage you to do that? Or do they sort of leave it up to you?

Maria: Nah, it's more or less up to me. They pay for it, so that's a kind of encouragement.

Ken: Do other people in your office do the same thing?

Maria: No, it's not really a common thing. And I think partly it's very useful in Rajasthan and in Orissa, but like in Tamil Nadu, I don't have any use for it.

Ken: When you go out to a place where you speak Hindi, do you get a better sense with that language background than you do in Tamil Nadu?

Maria: Yeah, I do think that I get a better contact with people. Even if you don't speak fluently, people say who you are, and where you live, and you can ask about their crops and the *mahiilaa mandals* (women's groups) or whatever. You do establish a direct relationship, which you don't get it in the same way as through a translator.

Ms. Johanssen's commitment to learn Hindi and communicate as directly as possible was uncommon among development professionals who are usually posted in several countries around the world during the course of their careers. She even tried to downplay a bit just how remarkable her commitment was when she pointed out that Hindi was not really so useful in South India. In my experience, however, when a foreigner who speaks Hindi well visits the non-Hindi speaking regions of the South, many Indians are still impressed by the demonstrated commitment on the part of the foreigner to learn at least one major language of India. This helps to establish credibility and give the parties more to discuss in substantial terms.

In this way, there was a clear distinction between those "developers" who, as one of Kaufmann's British informants said, have lived "in the mud," and those who have only encountered rural realities of developing societies in books, seminars, and brief, highly-structured visits to "the field." As Kaufmann's informant says:

> There is a collective delusion, particularly amongst those who have active experience … in government, as colonial officers. Very few have had village experience, they had had ex-pat experience. ... When you are dealing with people who haven't been right in it, in the mud, you can't keep on saying to them, 'You don't understand the real world.', because they'll marginalize me, and I'll be of no use. I need to get alongside them and use their language. I need to get into the paradigms of the system so as to hang on in. People's model of how the world works are based on analyses that don't really stand up to detailed dissection. (1997:127)

For professional aid donors such as Ms. Johanssen and Dr. Narayan, keeping one's feet "in the mud" is essential to long-term effectiveness when working from inside the development machine. According to my many interviews with development professionals from various organizations in Delhi, in spite of the best intentions the majority of these donors did not manage to spend much time in villages where their funds were allocated. Not only were the foreign funding agency managers generally out of touch with "village realities," but also many Indian professionals working at the same organizations rarely stepped outside the bubble of their middle-class worlds. Many of the Delhi-based professionals I met complained of limited opportunities to get outside the city's offices and meeting rooms due to the demands of constant and copious reporting

to headquarter offices back in an organization's home country. Ms. Johanssen said,

> …even though I know that a lot of donors think that Swedish aid is more slack than others, because it may be more flexible, and it seems like they can do whatever they want. Because we say, "Fine, you can use this two hundred thousand for this." But I don't think it is, because we do keep our eyes open.
>
> … I mean, we don't go in and define the goals and the activities of an NGO. That they have to do it themselves. But, of course, then we need reports. We need reports, and reports, and all that.

Ms. Johanssen speaks enough Hindi for basic communication in North India, but she also has projects in South India and East India, where few people speak Hindi, particularly in rural communities. We discussed how communication occurred in interactions where language was not common at all:

> Ken: So you're able (when you speak Hindi) to build bonds more easily (Maria: hmm!) Do you feel that you're able to build trust at that level? (Maria: Yeah, I think so.) Does it happen also in places where you don't speak the language by other means?
>
> Maria: Well, you always have a body language, and even if I have a translator, I try to actually look at the person I am talking to. I try to overcome these things. And that's, of course, very much depending on the person or the organization which I am with, if they really take on this role as a translator and don't try to, you know, put in their own views and things like that. If they really work as a translator, that's better.
>
> Ken: You can usually tell the difference between somebody who's not acting as a sort of professional translator? (Maria: Yeah.) How do you identify that?
>
> Maria: I think it's very much by body language, and there's an attitude that they don't really, that's not really confident in what people are saying. You know, they always want to *explain* and all that. If they (villagers) say something negative, they want to maybe cover it up. So, if you don't speak the language, then these things, these more subtle things are even more important. And I try really to use that, because I know that a lot of

> the information I, as a human being, receive, very little of that is through my conscious. I do receive a lot of information about how people are by body language. And I try to listen to that, especially when I am out in the field. Try to pick up things.

Looking back at the "Big Meeting," I found it difficult to believe that Dr. Sharma and the SVS team would have imagined that their foreign visitors could have interpreted so much by reading between the lines of the interactions they were trying to control. Given that the foreigners in Leelapur were all consultants with little experience of rural Rajasthan, there was probably little likelihood that the North Americans could have perceived as much as Ms. Johanssen described above from her own experiences. On the other hand, the uncomfortable feeling among foreigners that the translations they are receiving from the NGO hosts did not accurately convey the true sense of a villager's comments was commonly mentioned to me by many development professionals I met in Delhi. Many development specialists from aid agencies were already skeptical of claims made by their recipient NGOs when going into a meeting. They became even more suspicious if their NGO hosts in rural interactions "always want to *explain* and … if (the villagers) say something negative, they want to maybe cover it up." In such situations, many development professionals who do not speak the local language would be likely, as Ms. Johanssen suggested, to rely even more heavily on other powers of perception, including body language. The ability of the outsider to correctly read the signals is, again, primarily dependent upon that person's depth of experience in the context they are trying to interpret. Clearly though, NGO managers and staff should not assume that simply because their

foreign visitors do not speak the local language that they cannot interpret anything in their rural encounters without the intervention of supposed "translators" from the NGO.

"LESSONS LEARNED"

Many development documents I read during my research, especially evaluation studies and reports, end with a section popularly titled "Lessons Learned." The urge to constantly move ahead with new understanding that builds on previous work is certainly not confined to the international development sector, but this tendency is now becoming more pronounced as socio-cultural and other qualitative factors are increasingly seen as integral to interpreting the complex web of consequences, both intended and unintended, that lead to "successes" and "failures" in development projects around the world (Ferguson 1988). This final section summarizes a few general lessons that can be gleaned from the findings of this chapter.

Foreign donors who carry perspectives on village lives and realities that include notions of exoticism may be distracted from the critical issues that they should be investigating, and their resulting reports may prove to be little more than "junk," as Dr. Narayan suggested. Having foreign experts leading international development institutions may benefit the well-paid donors more than the intended beneficiaries, according to frequently cited formulations put forth by Escobar (1991). Certainly, when donors and their consultants view their experiences in "the field" through a lens of nostalgia or exotic coloring, the results do not point to increased understanding and sensitively designed plans for

development in a local community. As colonial administration was replaced, in great measure, by international development administration, the colonial civil servants were replaced by technical experts, many of whom were economists trained to treat underdevelopment with economic solutions. Now, as purely technical economic models for development tend to become increasingly viewed as "failures," socially aware and sensitive development projects, frequently administered by NGOs rather than GOs, are designed and assessed by contextual experts working alongside technical experts. In spite of these paradigmatic shifts in development discourses at the institutional level, the question of outsiders designing and monitoring development projects in "far-away lands" remains. Alan Rew posed this central question:

> Can foreign experts really hope to bring about change in cultures so different from their own? And why allow 'experts', whether foreign or local, to be the ones to decide which aspects of the society need 'developing'? (Rew 1997:85)

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

While I was in India researching for this study, George Marcus' review article titled "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography" appeared in the Annual Review of Anthropology (1995). My own efforts to research, synthesize, and finally write about international development processes occurring in rural Rajasthan from multiple perspectives have shown me just how challenging the task of researching, then writing, a "multi-sited ethnography" can be. The way that I have chosen to represent this particular ethnography is to focus on a single interaction, the "Big Meeting," and to then examine the interaction from the perspectives of some of the main players involved in the development project assessment exercise that day in Leelapur. The SVS managers, NADA representatives, and *gariib log* from Leelapur and BaNaawaT (whom I knew from earlier meetings) were all very gracious in providing me with the opportunity to observe, record their interactions and to interview them about their perspectives on the interactions and development communication, more generally. One of the chief challenges to any ethnographic research is to develop a level of trust with the informants and participants who are subjects of the study. In a multi-sited ethnography, this challenge extends to each community and site where the research is conducted, which means repeated visits and time to just "hang out" with people from each of these sites. Moving from location to location, listening to widely varying perspectives on development processes and communication, and then attempting to write something coherent

from all of this has been immensely exciting and challenging at the same time. This final chapter aims to revisit some of the main themes and then draw some conclusions emerging from this study of communication in development work. Before turning to these concluding comments, however, we take a final look at the interactions of the "Big Meeting," this time examining the concluding comments by the participants as they took their leave from one another.

LEAVE-TAKING AT THE "BIG MEETING"

From the time that Jaffer-jii took over from Shanti-Baaii in explaining the spacing and family planning to the visitors, Shanti-Baaii remained silent until the visitors had already left Leelapur. The leave-taking proceeded in the following manner:

*Language key:
- *English: Italics, [regular]*
- **Hindi: [Regular], bold**
- ***Mewari: Italics, bold***

Dr. Sharma: *Do you want to see one more (example)?*
Ms. Clark: *Well, I'm wondering what the program is, if we need to move.*
Dr. Sharma: *Yes, of course. We can go to another one.*

Ms. Clark: *This has been very, very interesting. I can't thank everyone enough for their time and….*
Dr. Sharma (loudly to the villagers still sitting quietly on the ground before the visitors): **She is saying that meeting you, all of you, she is very happy! And they liked this a lot! Eh?! One more time, for their welcome…** (begins clapping and about half of the villagers join him in applause for the visitors)
Dr. Joshi: (commanding the crowd to applaud) ***Give them applause to thank them for coming!*** *They are all greeting you that you have come and, uh, to this village…*

Dr. Whitcomb (anthropologist): *Well, we are very pleased that they were all willing to come to see us.* (She laughs, perhaps a bit uncomfortably.)
Dr. Drumm(seriously): *Do please tell them that we think they are very fortunate to be in this village with…*
Dr. Joshi: (interrupting Dr. Drumm, and speaking loudly to the villagers) ***He is saying that he is very happy that he came to this village and met you! So, one more time, give them applause…***
Dr. Sharma: **No, no.** *He means something else.* (to Dr. Drumm) *You please tell him. What do you mean? What are you…*
Dr. Drumm: That because of SVS…
Dr. Sharma (speaking over Dr. Drumm again as Dr. Joshi had just done): **Actually, he says that, you have joined SVS and because of this, you now have so many benefits. So, that is why he is saying, this is a very good thing! With SVS you have joined!** (suddenly shouting to villagers who began to speak in the back) **LISTEN! He is saying, you have joined with SVS, and look how much benefit you have now, that you people are very** *fortunate* (this last word in English).
Dr. Jain (politely): **Very fortunate** (in Hindi)
Dr. Sharma (correcting his choice of words): **Very fortunate, you are**.
Dr. Drumm (almost as if to himself): *Hmmmm…*
Dr. Sharma: **That you have joined with this NGO.**
Arvind (zonal worker): ***Applause!*** (Most villagers applaud again.)
The crowd breaks into multiple conversations simultaneously and begins standing up to leave.

After Dr. Sharma began applauding for their guests, the "outsiders," the rest of the crowd of SVS staff and villagers followed his cue to begin applauding, as well. Then, however, in an effort to somehow bestow even greater respect upon the guests, Dr. Joshi and Arvind commanded the villagers to applaud even more. After the first round of applause, each command to the *gariib log* for further applause seemed increasingly forced and unnatural, almost like "Applause" signs held up by television producers before a live audience. As the

performance and its orchestration were winding down, the foreign visitors could not complete their own comments on the meeting, and Dr. Narayan remained conspicuously silent throughout the final remarks.

Perhaps Dr. Narayan felt that any attempt to comment or thank the villagers for the meeting would be futile, since each time the other "outsiders" began to speak they were interrupted either by Dr. Sharma or Dr. Joshi in their attempts to foresee and interpret the intended meaning of their visitors' comments. At this point in the interaction, the SVS managers appeared pleased with how it went, smiling and gesticulating animatedly both to their village hosts and the "outsider" guests. In their excitement, they apparently forgot to let the guests speak for themselves as they attempted to thank their hosts in the village. On the other side, the *gariib log* were not afforded any chance to speak at all by the SVS meeting organizers as the visitors prepared to depart. In a sense, the leave-taking may be seen to have reflected the overall flow of the meeting. Dr. Sharma and other SVS senior staff members controlled the direction of the queries from the visitors and interpreted the comments (or orchestrated silence, as in the case of the *gariib log* at the end of the meeting) much as they controlled the introductions at the beginning of the meeting.

An examination of the comments Dr. Sharma made in Hindi to the villagers that supposedly translated the expressions of gratitude by the foreign visitors is also potentially telling of his own communicative intentions with the

gariib log, some of whom were also the beneficiaries of the SVS development programs throughout the Sulawaas-Leelapur-BaNaawaT area. Whereas the foreign visitors attempted to convey their appreciation of the villagers' decision to take time from their other responsibilities and attend the meeting, Dr. Sharma emphasized to the village audience that the foreigners are "very happy" that they came to this village and that "they liked this a lot!" In his comments, his focus remained on the achieving the desired satisfaction in his foreign guests, rather than on conveying the actual expressions of gratitude by the visitors. When Dr. Drumm said, "*Do please tell them that we think they are very fortunate to be in this village with…"* Dr. Joshi suddenly interrupted him and, pretending to translate, stated in Mewari to the villagers that "***he is very happy that he came to this village and met you!***" Dr. Sharma immediately realized that Dr. Joshi's "translation" was not accurate to what Dr. Drumm was trying to say. In a soft voice, his turned to Dr. Drumm and requested him to begin again, "*You please tell him. What do you mean? What are you…*" When Drumm began again, "That because of SVS…" was apparently all that Dr. Sharma needed to hear from his respected guest. He immediately cut him off again, this time explaining to the villagers what he perhaps wished that Dr. Drumm had said completely, that "**you have joined SVS and because of this, you now have so many benefits. So, that is why he is saying, this is a very good thing! With SVS you have joined!**" As mentioned in chapter two, SVS competed with at least one other

NGO for the loyalties of villagers in the hamlets around Sulawaas, and Dr. Sharma wished to convey to the villagers present that because they had chosen to "join with SVS," they were very "fortunate." He was very likely not even aware that another NGO worked in the same village, and this was clearly not the intended meaning of Dr. Drumm's comment. Dr. Drumm did seem impressed by the SVS work demonstrated that day by Shanti-Baaii and others, but he was not concerned to cement village alliances to SVS with his comments.

So, in the introductions to the "Big Meeting," Dr. Sharma tried to employ Chambers' notions of "participation" in their own village development and emphasize to his foreign guests that SVS's approach to development work is not "top-down." On the other hand, by the end of the meeting when he perhaps felt that he had already accomplished his task of impressing the "outsider" guests, in his concluding remarks he turned his attention to impressing the *gariib log* present. Meanwhile, many of the villagers were apparently restless and inattentive to his proclamations, prompting Dr. Sharma to command their attention, raising his voice to say, "**LISTEN! He is saying, you have joined with SVS, and look how much benefit you have now, that you people are very** *fortunate*." He momentarily could not recall the Hindi word for "fortunate" (bhaagyavaan), and Dr. Meeta Jain respectfully provided the correct Hindi term for him.

SUMMARY OF AGENDAS AT THE "BIG MEETING"

Among the various themes discussed in the preceding discussions of development communication in a rural Rajasthani setting, questions concerning power and language repeatedly arise. When we see Dr. Sharma and Dr. Joshi directing, mediating, and interpreting the conversation both for the "outsider" visitors and the villagers at the "Big Meeting," their relative positions of strength in the hierarchy of the SVS organizational structure are reinforced by their relative positions of strength in terms of their linguistic command over the range of ideas expressed by all the participants in the meeting. In fact, from that position of command, they end up doing much of the talking themselves, often interrupting or completing others' thoughts with their own interpretations of what either the villagers or the foreign NADA visitors meant to say. As seen in the description from the second chapter of what either the non-English speakers or non-Hindi speakers could have understood from the introductory phase of the meeting, without an understanding of at least Hindi and English, no participant in the meeting could arrive a complete comprehension of the basic issues directed and discussed by Drs. Sharma, Joshi and the other SVS managers and staff with a command over both languages. At the same time, these people in positions of linguistic privilege at the "Big Meeting" were probably not consciously or overtly trying to mislead either the non-Hindi or non-English speakers at the meeting. Clearly, the pressures of the meeting play an important role in the behavior of

these SVS managers, as well. With the entire future of SVS efforts in the area of Female Reproductive Health hanging in the balance, the SVS Health Unit managers and other SVS leadership are very concerned about the impressions formed by the NADA program evaluators. This anxiety may have led Dr. Sharma and others to become more nervous and, in response, more controlling of the interactions and the conversation.

Throughout the "Big Meeting," we have seen how interactions were managed through re-interpretation of supposedly translated comments and how performances by the villagers for the "outsider" audience were directed, albeit unintentionally at times, by the SVS managers attempting to persuade the donor representatives of the high value that the NGO programs bring to the village communities. Simultaneously, the SVS managers worked to enhance their institutional legitimacy in their area before their village-based "clients."

Gariib log brought their own agendas to the meeting, most apparent here in Shanti-Baaii's desire to enhance her own prestige and legitimacy as the Traditional Birth Attendant for her village and convince villagers that she was at least as effective as her rival SVS Ladies Health Worker, Kamalaa-Bai. As she enacts her role to describe and animate the work that she and other SVS TBAs performed throughout the region, she believed that her esteem in the eyes of fellow villages may rise. Performing this role whenever she is called upon to

demonstrate SVS work and supposed successes, she had become increasingly less shy and more adept at impressing her audience.

Finally, the "outsiders" also brought their own perspectives and priorities to bear upon the interaction, although the foreigners seemed to have a different set of priorities from their Delhi-based host, Dr. Narayan. The North American foreigners with relatively little experience of rural India seemed pleased that they were able to get so far "off the beaten path" of other Westerners, or regular tourists. As anthropologist Laurie Whitcomb said when they first got out of their Ambassador cars, "Wow! We're really here!" Getting into "the field" is a primary goal in itself for many development professionals who feel often frustrated that they spend too much time stuck in air-conditioned offices, "away from the real action." On the other hand, native "outsider" Dr. Narayan expressed frustration with her role as a director for her foreign guests on these rural, fact-finding experiences, stating "we go to so much trouble each time somebody comes from abroad like that. It is a big headache, but we make sure that they meet enough people, so that they get the right impression, and they go back and produce what we think is junk."

Taking these perspectives from a single development interaction altogether, we may finally question the overall efficacy of having "outsiders," especially foreigners, going to remote villages in order to "evaluate and monitor" the activities of local NGOs, their staff, and villagers living there. The primary

reason given by funding agencies for having international "experts" going "into the field" to see what is really happening "on the ground" is that their findings on the activities must finally be interpreted and related back to other decision-making development professionals owing their allegiance to large charity and governmental organizations based in "the developed world." According to at least several Delhi- and Rajasthan-based Indian development professionals like Dr. Narayan whom I met, however, these visits by foreign "experts" often end up looking more like a sort of "development tourism" for highly experienced tourists.

One can perhaps understand the pressures felt by some NGO managers and staff to orchestrate a successful performance for their foreign donor representatives in their brief village visits, which may lead them to become overbearing and even unknowingly insensitive. Conversely, one should not perhaps lay all of the blame with those often (at least at one time) idealistic development professionals trained in Western international development programs and hired into large funding agencies and consulting firms. This group of development professionals also includes academically oriented people that may also tend toward intense self-reflection and even self-doubt. By another token, simply imagining that because they are "indigenous" villagers would enter into such development interactions without personal agendas or even guile is potentially naïve, as seen by Shanti-Baaii's situation. Having acquired a *post-"awakening" consciousness*, the intended rural beneficiaries of development

projects also tend to become increasingly savvy about manipulating those processes for personal or community gain.

DISCOURSES AND DEVELOPMENTS

As discussed in the introductory chapter, the primary focus of analysis of this research is to draw linkages between micro- experiences and macro-ideologies of ***Development*** while examining variable notions of ***discourse*** along a range between linguistic and social theoretical understandings of the term. The following remarks address these broader issues more directly again in order to draw some theoretical and practical conclusions from the examination of this ethnographic material.

When considering linguistic notions of discourse and social theoretical notions of discourse within such a context, we can see how individuals and communities engage in a cognitive and social shift from initially little or no understanding of development discourse and paradigms to an increasing ability to understand and use development terms in daily or performance-based interactions and finally arrive at a high level of fluency in both the language and concepts of development practices and ideologies. In other words, people in all of the development communities represented in this research – *gariib log*, NGO staff and managers, and donor agency managers and consultants – become initiated first into the linguistic discourses of development, eventually leading to their

personal involvement in upholding and propagating the discursive structures of development ideologies.

Micro-level experiences and expressions from development interactions, such as the one examined at the "Big Meeting," are intimately linked to the participants' macro-level understandings of Development as a larger "process." As mentioned earlier, "*vikaas*" translates from Hindi in it closest form not as "development" but rather as "progress," which refers to a *process* of change, in this case change in a positive direction. Individual *gariib log* who have an established or dawning *post-"awakening" consciousness*, such as Nanalaal and Shanti-Baaii, are more likely to understand this process of development as a system in which they play an important role. As Shanti-Baaii mentioned about her increasing experience with development and foreigners,

> The first time I was shy, I didn't know what to say! The first time, I went, SVS wanted that, and I was shy because "how should I speak?" People, big, big people have come, so how should I speak? Like that, I was shy. Slowly, slowly, I am not shy now. It broke, that shyness.

In this remark, Shanti-Baaii points out how she has been able to overcome shyness in front of "big, big people" through her repeated practice of performing her knowledge and expertise for the "outsiders." Her description of the evolution of her understanding and comfort with her role as an informant of village-level development points to her learning how to engage in *vikaas* as a central defining aspect of her life in Sulawaas.

Similarly, Arvind, in his role as a block-level SVS coordinator, mentions the importance of viewing development work as a "long-term" process in which immediate goals represent sign posts pointing to larger efforts to encourage "awakening" in the minds of rural participants:

> My feeling is that, from our perspective here in this village, just doing one project or one type of development work, the village's *vikaas* won't be possible. You have to stay here for a longer time, seeing the problems that they have here, staying here with them, only with long-term development can we have any impact. Just taking one-one project, like for women's development one income generation project has been undertaken, from this alone there won't be any real women's development. Continuously joining with the people, working with the people, not in just one field like health education or agriculture, but in all the fields together, only then can the people's development be possible.

As practitioners and participants in development increasingly come to understand "*vikaas*" as a *process* rather than simply a project or series of projects (such as building check-dams or planting trees), the importance of development concepts related to "awakening" also increases for those individuals.

These comments by Shanti-Baaii and Arvind represent varying degrees of command over, or fluency in, the language and concepts of Development as both daily practices with linguistic discourses for communicating development processes and a set of ideological discursive structures, in the Foucauldian sense, that encompass and define relationships in development interactions. Shanti-Baaii is a relative newcomer to the world of development work as practiced by NGOs such as SVS, but she evinces a growing understanding of the importance of communicating development practices as a performance for professional "developers" who she refers to as "big, big people." As we witnessed in Chapter

Three, Shanti-Baaii has also learned that development interactions such as the "Big Meeting" hold the potential for her and others in the village to achieve some personal gain through their participation in development processes. In her case, she is able to gain a perceived advantage over her local rival, Kalawaati, in her attempts to establish herself as the primary women's health worker for Sulawaas working with SVS. In this sense, we can see that Shanti-Baaii uses her growing fluency in development concepts and language to enhance her standing in her village. Earlier we have referred to this evolution as central to defining and developing a *post-"awakening" consciousness* among *gariib log* as their exposure to and experience of development practices increases.

Arvind, on the other hand, has worked with SVS for several years in a coordinating role and has, therefore, been repeatedly exposed to development concepts and language such as "sustainability," "awareness-building," and "people's participation." Just as Dr. Sharma understands the importance of infusing his own discourse, albeit somewhat awkwardly at times, with these terms and ideas in order to impress his NADA visitors, Arvind's fluent use of these development terms and paradigms in his own descriptions for engaging development work demonstrate his own understanding that in order to be successful as a local-level "developer," command over these discourses of development is essential.

Macro-level understandings of Development as a *discourse* in the Foucauldian sense perhaps evolve, then, from initially micro-level encounters

with linguistic discourses and terms of development. Foucault's notion of discourse states that:

> Each society has its regime of truth, its 'general politics' of truth: that is, the types of discourse which it accepts and makes function as true; the mechanisms and instances which enable one to distinguish true and false statements, the means by which each is sanctioned; the techniques and procedures accorded value in the acquisition of truth; the status of those who are charged with saying what counts as true. (1980:131)

As a Foucauldian discourse, Development must then be learned both by individuals and societies before it becomes, in Bourdieu's term, "*doxic*." Bourdieu points out that doxic truths and realities "go without saying because they come without saying." In the case of Development practices and ideologies in a rural Rajasthani Adi-Vasi community, the linguistic expressions of development ideas must first be *said* before they may "come without saying." That is to say, Development in BaNaawaT and Leelapur has not yet achieved the status of *doxic truth* that other ideologies, such as the unquestioned role of traditional village hierarchies, have obtained in these local communities. As the language of Development continues through daily and ritualized development practices to articulate in these communities with the structures of power inherent in the terms and the relationships to which they refer, the discursive structural aspects of Development will also creep further into the social fabric of the region. One or two generations from now, Development is much more likely to exist in these rural communities as a full-blown *doxic* reality.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND POTENTIAL APPLICATIONS

This study of discourses of development in a rural Rajasthani setting aims to make a modest contribution to academic and practical discussions of language and power in development processes and interactions. In both linguistic and ideological studies of discourse in practice, this study suggests some possibilities for the further analysis of the ethnographic material presented here.

While I have initiated here an analysis of some linguistic moments that inform and embody development ideologies and paradigms in specific contexts, I have not been able to undertake the rigorous sociolinguistic analysis of the material that could yield further insights into the ways in which linguistic practices are both representative and generative of systems of power in rural development interactions. A deeper analysis of code-switching and its relationship to expressions of hierarchies would allow us to better understand how linguistic diversity may create spaces for contesting as well as maintaining existing power structures in a local community. Close examination of instances and processes of what Irvine describes as "entextualization" and "recontextualization" when text is transferred from one contextual setting to another, and the shifts in meaning and interpretation associated with those movements would certainly enhance our understanding of how power is upheld and/or contested in development settings through the use of common and ideologically pregnant Development terms and concepts.

From the social theoretical perspective on the discursive nature of Development in rural settings, a closer examination of the emergent role of

Development ideologies within individuals and communities as they become increasing drawn away from the "periphery" into mainstream economic and social systems over the next few decades would be a fascinating and potentially important contribution to understandings of how Development assists or hobbles their growth, in general. Here, I mean to suggest that as the *desires* of a *post-"awakening" consciousness* take hold over generations, one should continually question how individuals and communities are impacted by the imported concepts and values that come along with Development.

Practitioners of development projects may also find some beneficial applications of ideas discussed in this study. One of the most important lessons to be learned from this examination of interactions at the "Big Meeting," I would suggest, is what Maria Johanssen suggested as a better way to plan for a donor's visit to "the field" in a monitoring or evaluation meeting:

> It's totally different with the different NGOs. Some of them, when you go out to a village, you go out to interview them, and they just continue with their everyday work, and if there is a meeting, I come along. They just introduce me as a friend, and I have come to learn about their activities. People say I work with other NGOs in other areas, and I am very interested in what they are doing.

SVS clearly works from a much more centralized, even top-down approach to organizing donor visits to their field sites than what Ms. Johanssen alternatively describes. In my own observations with another small NGO with only three full-time employees, I also noticed that "outsider" visitors tended to be more impressed by the depth of their interactions with villagers or the "recipients" of development projects when there was as little interference or interpretation by the concerned NGO hosts as possible. The tactic of orchestrating "development

performances" in village settings for the benefit of donor visitors seemed to be less appreciated by many donors I met who were constantly seeking "transparency" to report to their superiors and colleagues back in Delhi or at overseas offices in their home countries. In general, most donor representatives tended to prefer the most "natural" setting they could find when obtaining material for their reports. On the other hand, donors could also benefit by inquiring from their NGO hosts how and why they chose to organize their fact-finding meetings in the way that they have. Both NGOs and donor agencies should ask many questions about their approaches to development work and the values or ideologies that drive them when choosing to "partner" with one another. I saw instances where this happened regularly, and I also witnessed situations in which these values were not clearly conceived or communicated by either party, leading to further confusions and frustrations as the relationships developed. *Gariib log* may also take away from this study a heightened awareness of the need to comprehend and appropriately use development language and concepts in order to further material and even social ideological aspirations for themselves and their community. In this sense, *gariib log* who might read or hear about certain aspects of this study may stand to gain the most from perusing its contents, just as Nanalaal understood the tremendous power of possessing a complete transcript of his first *panchayat* meeting over which he presided in order to keep the traditional power elite honest when recalling their commitments to them.[1]

[1] Before I left BaNaawaT to return to the U.S., I left one of my audiocassette recorders and some cassettes and batteries with Nanalaal and his village panchayat.

In spite of the wide range of personal agendas and communication styles encountered during the course of this research, I was generally deeply impressed by the commitments demonstrated by people from each of these groups regarding their respective roles and responsibilities. While Development certainly brings new complexities and challenges to formerly remote communities such as Leelapur and BaNaawaT, on occasion opportunities and realizations of actual *jaagrin* ("awakening") also occur. The efforts of many people mentioned here, and many others not mentioned as well, are often made in good faith and yield "successes" for many people concerned. As the work for better and more appropriate "Development" continues, one may hope that participants and partners from all sides will ask better and more pointed questions of one another in the process.

FINALLY, IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Discussion (in Hindi) with Arvind Singh, SVS staff member based near Leelapur:

Ken: What do you think the people think about me coming here myself. Do you think they find it strange in any way?

Arvind: The villagers would find it a bit strange, that's true. You have come from outside, from America. And they would think, "He has come, so he will give something." This is always in the minds of the people, that this guy is going to send some money. You wouldn't know that, but whether you are about to give or not give, when you go to a village, the first thought they will have is that you are going to give them some money.

Ken: So, they are likely to think that if I come to their village, they may get something from me.

Arvind: They <u>will</u> get something. Not that they *may* get something from you, they think they <u>will</u> get something from you. They will be absolutely sure of it! (smiling) But eventually, after we tell them why you came, they don't think that any longer.

Ken: If you could say one thing to people who make decisions far from about the work you do, maybe they are in Washington DC, maybe they are in Delhi, what would you want them to know about how they should view the work that you do here in Jhilaasanaa block?

Arvind: My feeling is that, from our perspective here in this village, just doing one project or one type of development work, the village's *vikaas* won't be possible. You have to stay here for a longer time, seeing the problems that they have here, staying here with them, only with long-term development can we have any impact. Just taking one-one project, like for women's development one income generation project has been undertaken, from this alone there won't be any real women's development. Continuously joining with the people, working with the

people, not in just one field like health education or agriculture, but in all the fields together, only then can the people's development be possible.

Ken: Do you believe this is possible?

Arvind: It is possible. Whether it is an NGO making it happen, or whether it is the government making it happen, it can happen. Getting the people to sit together, discuss the issues, it can happen.

Ken: Is it happening now?

Arvind: Yes, but it is only happening in one *part*. There are a lot of areas where this kind of work is going on. It may be happening in one area, but there are many others where it is not. There is some coordination in the work, and some things are happening, but as much needs to happen, that is not happening now. There needs to be this coordination of all activities in an area together. That is not happening yet.

(After the official interview ended, this discussion followed.)

Ken: It is really great to hear your experiences like this.

Arvind: I am not such an experienced person here. There are many others who have been working fifteen, twenty years already.

Ken: But you may represent the future of the organization, too.

Arvind: It's true that I will keep doing this work myself for a long time to come. This is my idea. I may work in this NGO for less time, but I will keep doing this type of work. I am looking for opportunities for coordination, as we said earlier. If I don't find that chance here with SVS, I can leave this NGO. But this is the work that I will do.

Excerpt from a discussion (in English) with Clark Applegarth, PhD, Stanford-educated agricultural economist on thirty years as a "development professional":

> Clark: I had a contract with USAID in Nepal back in 1982-83. We were working primarily in the terai, trying to learn about the local farming methods in order to propose improvements upon the work they were doing there.
>
> I was offered a position working there (with USAID), but I turned it down. I felt that it would have been a great job if I were primarily looking to have an exciting and wonderful experience. At the time, I was concerned to do something that would have a lasting positive impact on the people's lives where I was working. I ended up going to Ethiopia. But looking back on it, I now think that I should have made having an exciting and interesting experience the criterion for deciding where I would work and what I would do, anyway.
>
> As an agricultural economist, looking back on what I have done, a lot, if not most, of the work I did has been shown or proven to have been "bad for the local people" in the end.

Excerpt from the discussion (in Hindi-Mewari) from Chapter Two with Heerlal-jii, local shopkeeper and development philosopher in BaNaawaT, describing how foreign visitors offered a single blanket to each family in the village to protect against the winter cold:

> Heerlaal: If you gave (only) me a blanket, then I should hang it up in the wind (outside to share it with the rest of the village). If you give us each a (a single) blanket (for each family), then we think that it is for thickening up the manure or cowdung (by shaking it on the blanket). 'Thicken it up, thicken it up' so that the cowdung will get harder, and 'she gave the blanket, so take it.' Like this, my people here in BaNaawaT prepared their manure and cowdung, and everyone got a blanket.

EPILOGUE

Before I left Udaipur back in 1996, I arranged three presentations of my work, such as it was then: a large presentation for people I worked with at SVS, another catered event for people from all of the other NGOs in the area, and a small gathering with a handful of villagers who were interested enough to hear what I learned from my time spent with them. At the presentation for NGOs not attached to SVS, the following question was posed to me by one of the senior people present, "When are you going to finish writing this research? These things usually take so long that no one cares any more by the time we see them." In my naiveté, I assured her that I would finish my writing as soon as possible upon my return to the US, hopefully less than two years. Eight years later, I am sitting in New Jersey tonight somewhat ashamed of myself. Much has happened in the past eight years: three jobs, years spent in California, Texas, Jaipur (Rajasthan) and Delhi, my second marriage to my wonderfully understanding and supportive wife, Angela, and, above all, the birth of our son, Matthew. Finishing my dissertation has not been among these events until now. I sincerely apologize to all who have waited for me, especially my friends and colleagues throughout Udaipur District and Delhi, James Brow and all of my (past and present) dissertation committee members, and my family.

Some of the themes or trends described in this study have changed since I completed the research. One of the most significant changes has been the continued "professionalization" of SVS as a development organization, which is to say that more young professionals educated at elite schools such as the Tata School for Social Sciences in Mumbai have entered into the mid-management levels of the organization. Some people have told me that this has also increased tensions between relatively well-paid professionals and the "local staff" and village workers who feel that their opportunities for advancement are curtailed by so many professionals arriving each year. On the other hand, the at times rather patronizing style of communication exhibited by former SVS leadership who retired from Government service to join the NGO is somewhat less evident with the departure of those original founders of the Udaipur NGO community. The young professionals have also been accused, at times, of arrogant and insensitive interactive (or non-interactive) styles of communication both in villages and at the Udaipur headquarters. Nevertheless, many of these young professionals also win the respect of their colleagues both in the office and "in the field" due to their humility and demonstrated commitment to development work.

Life has not changed a lot in villages such as Leelapur or BaNaawaT. Young people continue to look for opportunities outside their communities, as agriculture is as precarious a proposition as ever. In the past two years, the monsoon has been better than the preceding drought years, but the difficulties of

sustaining a growing family in the Aravali Mountains of Southern Rajasthan are growing more intense with each passing year.

Of course, life has changed for everyone involved with this project. Here I would like to briefly comment on a few of the changes of which I am aware. In BaNaawaT, Nanaalaal was not re-elected to his position of sarpanch in the election of 1998. When I met him last in Udaipur at the SVS headquarters in April, 2000, he told me he was happy to be relieved of the stress of that role. He was still involved in SVS education projects in his village, and he reported to me that Heeralaal-jii was still running the store there. I do not know how Shanti-Baaii is doing now, though I understand that she is still working with SVS as a Traditional Birth Attendant. At SVS, Dr. Sharma left the stewardship of the Health Unit in the capable hands of Dr. Meeta Jain. She and I met several times between 1999 and 2002 during my visits to Udaipur. The NADA-funded program was renewed after the "Big Meeting," and SVS health projects have since expanded in their scope and reach under Dr. Jain's team of professionals and village workers. Ajit-jii moved back from Jhilaasanaa Block office to the Udaipur Headquarters in a promotion, a move he told me that pleased his wife and family very much. Taussif bought my motorbike before I left Udaipur, and we remained friends after the research was over. I still see him and visit his family whenever I return to Udaipur. Dr. Narayan left NADA about two years after I last met her in 1996. I don't know where she is now.

"Development" for each of these people was not finally just an institutional phenomenon; it was a personal and life-changing experience. I can say the same for myself, as I stumbled through the research that brought me to sit in their offices, to eat in their homes, to drink at their wells. I was motivated to explore this topic in part by a desire to understand how I might effectively join the ranks of development professionals similar to some of those described here. In the course of completing the research, analysis and writing of this work, I have re-evaluated this course for myself. I look forward to learning how people alongside whom I stood in Rajasthan and Delhi will read this brief reported slice taken from our days and nights spent together. I hope and intend to continue my own support, from near or from afar, for their commendable efforts that continue until today. Finally, I thank everyone involved in this study for their tremendous hospitality, and I hope that they will always carry with them the warmth and humor they shared with me in the face of extreme conditions of poverty, deprivation and profound human struggle.

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